

BABIES  
and  
Politics

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# IN THESE TIMES

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# EPA

## ENVIRONMENTAL POISONING AGENCY

Reagan deregulators'  
last tango with  
corporate America

Dick Russell Reports

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Adding it up a new way

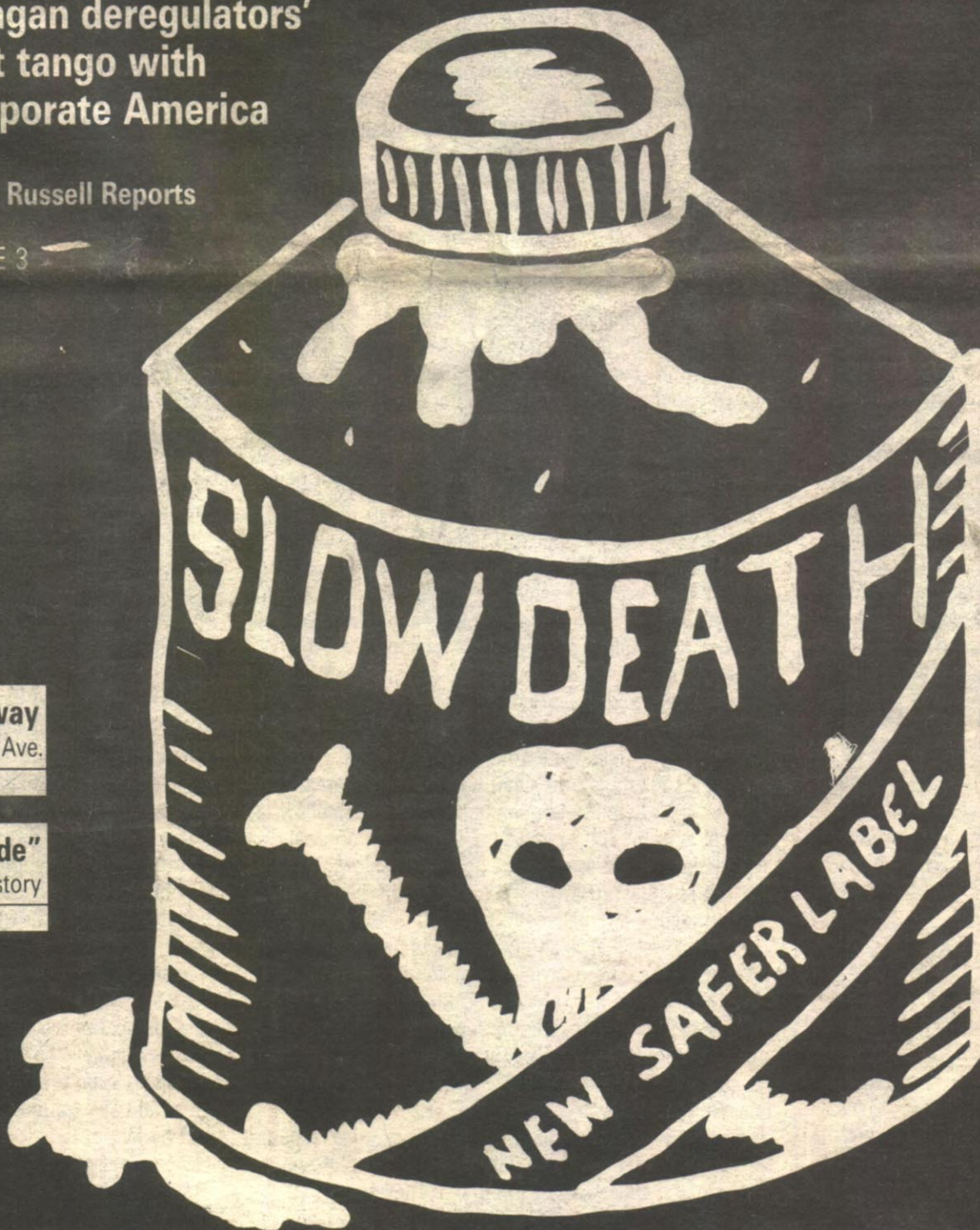
Freeing politics from Madison Ave.

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"Chalice and the Blade"

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## Fighting the utilities—by buying them

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

Suffering "rate shock" from disastrous nuclear power decisions or other predations by private utilities, a growing number of cities are seeking refuge through public ownership of their electrical utility systems.

In the next couple of weeks New Orleans is expected to take a definitive step toward buying its local utility in order to escape anticipated huge costs from the colossally miscalculated Grand Gulf nuclear reactor. By March, New York's state-created Long Island Power Authority should decide on whether to proceed with a buy-out of Long Island Lighting Company that would shut down the \$5 billion Shoreham nuclear plant. And the Chicago City Council recently voted to expand its initial feasibility studies of alternatives to the city's 42-year-old franchise with Commonwealth Edison that expires at the end of 1990. The initial studies concluded the city could save \$12.5 billion to \$18 billion over 20 years by buying out some part of heavily nuclear Com Ed.

At least 40 communities have initiated formal studies of possible public ownership. And many more are considering other options such as using a municipal distribution system. Such a system could take competitive bids for bulk power or tap low-cost federal hydropower. Some San Franciscans are fighting to have the city compete with or replace Pacific Gas and Electric, which supplies the city's power even though a 1912 federal law intended the city to have a municipal utility using electricity generated at its water reservoir dam in the Sierra Nevadas.

The moves toward municipalization take place against a backdrop of turmoil in the electric utility industry. Besides the well-known problems with nuclear power, utilities have been threatened by decisions of some big business users to opt out. Such businesses are choosing to produce their own power through cogeneration, a process that uses the steam byproduct of industrial processes or heating to generate electricity.

**Shocking history:** Although decentralization now seems to be helping big business rather than ordinary people, the opposite of what advocates originally expected, "the more significant trend is consolidation, mergers and centralization of economic power [in the utility industry] rather than its breakdown," argues Scott Ridley, co-author of *Power Struggle: The Hundred Year War Over Electricity*. Utilities are also fighting to block or buy out municipal power and to escape citizen protests and existing state regulation, both of which they blame for their financial troubles. In New Orleans, for example, the utility tried three different ploys to legally stymie municipalization. They failed on all three, but in Arkansas last year utilities succeeded in changing the law to make public ownership and escape from Grand Gulf costs much more difficult.

The most naked and successful attack on municipal ownership came late last year. Rep. Dan Rostenkowski of Chicago, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, pushed through legislation without hearings that restricted the use of municipal bonds for takeovers of private utilities. (Last-minute lobbying granted an exemption for Long Island.) Rostenkowski argued that it was purely a tax-reform measure. His legislation, however, guarded the utilities' private status by stipulating that tax-free bonds could not be used to buy private facilities, but could be used to build municipal power plants.

A report in *The Bond Buyer* is probably closer to the truth. Rostenkowski pushed the legislation "at the request of James J. O'Connor, the chairman of Commonwealth Edison and a longtime acquaintance of Mr. Rostenkowski," according to the report. It was also, the trade journal reported, intended as a slap at Rostenkowski's political foe, the late Mayor Harold Washington, who had strongly pushed finding alternatives to Com Ed.

Rostenkowski's legislation increased financing costs and thus reduced the savings for potential takeovers by about one-fourth. It will have a "chilling effect" on consideration of public ownership by roughly 700 cities whose utility franchises expire soon that will consequently "cripple them even in their ability to negotiate" better franchise terms, Ridley argues.

**A better way:** More than 2,200 public utilities, including such large systems as Los Angeles, Memphis, San Antonio, Orlando and Omaha, exist in the U.S. They serve 13.6 percent of the nation's utility needs at rates averaging nearly 30 percent below those of private utilities. Public power tends to be cheaper because the utilities don't pay stockholders profit, have lower management costs and are more likely to push energy efficiency rather than expanded sales. Public-owned utilities pay no federal taxes, but even though they are exempt from state and

local taxes typically return more to the locality in municipal revenue than private utilities pay in taxes. Many public utilities were formed to fight the abuses of the power trusts that emerged in the early 20th century. It was Samuel Insull, the founder of Commonwealth Edison and most notorious of the electrical robber barons, who proposed state regulations of licensed monopolies in an effort to stop public power.

As Insull realized, regulation has often protected the utilities more than consumers. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has regularly acquiesced to Com Ed's massive nuclear power program, despite concerted consumer protests for more than a decade. The capitulation has resulted in some of the highest electricity rates in the nation, and Com Ed profit rates are greater than most big Chicago-area businesses. Com Ed now has a reserve generating capacity about 22 percent beyond its peak demands. And if its three new nuclear plants begin operation it will have a peak reserve capacity of 43 percent despite the fact that 15 percent is considered quite adequate.

Now Commonwealth Edison is seeking a 27 percent rate hike, having lost an earlier bid for a similar-size hike masquerading as a rate "freeze" (see *In These Times*, March 25, 1987). Even at current rates many businesses have moved operations or bypassed the Chicago area because of Com Ed's high rates. And one of the major causes of housing abandonment has also been high utility rates and utility cutoffs.

**Taking power:** Chicago's initial feasibility study suggested four options. The city could negotiate a new franchise on more favorable terms (Denver, for example, has a voice in all major utility investments and requires pursuit of the least-costly options, such as investment in conservation or cogeneration). Or the city could establish a municipal utility to purchase Edison's facilities in the city and buy additional power. The report said the city's other options are to create a municipal utility that would also buy part of Edison's generating capacity, or form a public power authority to buy cheaper bulk power for the city and its schools, public housing and public transit.

## INSIDE STORY

A municipal utility would reduce demand for power by investing in energy efficiency and encouraging profitable sale of cogenerated electricity (which has been misrepresented by Com Ed as requiring investments by residents and businesses). Buying what would be mainly a distribution system would be cheaper than buying a share at the plants themselves. And this option would not stick the city with the risks of Com Ed's nuclear plants. But there could be risks in buying Chicago's large quantities of power on the market. Buying part of the generating facility would be likely to save more money than a distribution system. It would also guarantee supply, but it would require more capital up front. In any case, as Chicago and its suburbs begin to bail out of Com Ed, the costs of carrying Edison's overbuilt mistakes could be disproportionately dumped on whoever remains—unless the ICC makes the stockholders take the loss.

Without a committed mayor like Harold Washington to push for the best deal and fight for serious consideration of municipalization, Chicago's alternative energy future will rely on development of a broad political movement, like the one in New Orleans. The media has attacked the city that can't run the Chicago Housing Authority or collect parking tickets for considering the operation of nuclear power plants. It is, first of all, a crude distortion. The city does run a water system and airport fairly well, and the utility management would probably be contracted to professionals anyway. More important, it is testimony to the power of Com Ed—described by one local attorney as an "implacable, resourceful, ruthless octopus"—to dominate the political and economic establishment and impose its self-interest as it depletes and destroys the city, its people and even that establishment itself. □

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By Dick Russell

**W**HAT IS GOING ON AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency (EPA)? In what consumer advocate Ralph Nader calls "a kamikaze dive," over the past two months the EPA has embarked on a systematic overhaul of its toxic chemicals policy, appeasing industry at the expense of public health.

**Day-by-day deregulation:** A chronicle of the federal agency's recent decisions shows an alarming reversal of standards many environmentalists had already thought were too low:

- **November 23:** Citing lack of funds, the EPA announces that it is dropping its primary tests for measuring the exposure of humans to toxic substances. These include longtime programs to measure the accumulation of dangerous chemicals in body fat and blood. It was one of these tests—the National Human Adipose Survey—that played a major part in banning production of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which were showing up in fatty tissues in alarming quantities. After PCBs were outlawed in the late '70s, later tests showed a dramatic decline of their presence in humans. The same survey has also shown existing levels of toxic substances like dioxins and DDT in an overwhelming majority of the individuals tested.

Joseph Breen, chief of the field studies branch in the EPA's toxic substances office, told the *New York Times* cutting these tests is "almost crazy....How do you winnow down to those chemicals that the health scientists have to do something about?" Breen asked.

- **December 9:** The EPA releases a new draft study that lowers its assessment of the cancer-causing potential of dioxin to one-sixteenth of its original 1985 estimate. While admitting that dioxin remains the most toxic substance it regulates (about 10,000 times more likely to cause cancer than PCBs at the same level of exposure), the EPA maintains that dioxin is probably a "promoter" of other cancer-causing agents rather than an initiator. The study will substantially effect the way the EPA regulates exposure to dioxins—byproducts of pesticide production, and combustion processes such as incineration.

- **December 10:** Testimony before a congressional committee reveals that a coalition of petrochemical companies and their insurers has formed to mount a four-year study of the Superfund program for cleanup of hazardous waste sites. The companies have retained former EPA chief William Ruckelshaus to represent them. "The EPA's reaction was that this was manna from heaven," says Bill Walsh, an attorney with U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) in Washington. Walsh says EPA officials seemed excited about "somebody doing a wide-ranging study that they would do themselves if they had the resources. Some congressional staffers felt the same way. Everyone ignores the vested bottom-line interest of all these corporations in escaping financial liability."

- **December 15:** Slightly more than a year after an EPA announcement that it was considering permanent restrictions on Monsanto's alachlor, the nation's most widely-used herbicide, the agency says it will allow continued use. A four-year EPA study concludes that the chemical does not pose an "unreasonable" risk of cancer, and that can-

celling alachlor would cost farmers nearly \$500 million in first-year readjustments. Alachlor, a known groundwater contaminant, had previously been outlawed by Canada and the state of Massachusetts.

- **December 29:** The EPA tells Congress that new federal regulations of toxic waste from drilling operations for oil and gas are unnecessary. In 1985, the industry generated over 12 billion barrels of liquid and mud waste containing such hazardous substances as benzene, lead, arsenic, barium and antimony. But because most of the dangers to groundwater come from violations of current regulations, the EPA has decided that tighter laws wouldn't provide much additional protection. But protection was not the only thing the EPA was worried about. New rules could reduce domestic oil and gas production by up to 12 percent and create up to \$4.5 billion in additional costs to be borne by consumers, according to the agency.

- **January 3:** Because of new evidence based on what the agency called improved techniques for laboratory animal testing, the EPA announces that many chemicals are less dangerous to humans than previously believed. Therefore, says the agency, it is reassessing the risks of many substances it regulates. These include the threat of skin cancer from ingested arsenic, an ingredient in pesticides that enters food and water supplies. The EPA now finds that ingested arsenic is one-tenth as dangerous as it thought in 1984. Marvin Schneiderman, former associate director of the National Cancer Institute, comments that it appears "not much science was being used" by the EPA in reassessment.

- **January 4:** The EPA eases restrictions on Du Pont's cyanazine, a weed-killer used on up to one-fourth of the U.S. corn crop. The agency explains that the chemical appears to pose less of a threat to groundwater than once feared.

- **January 5:** A study released by the Center for Responsive Law in Washington, D.C., reveals that nearly one out of five of the 79,000 public water systems in the U.S. appear to

be contaminated with chemicals. It charges the EPA with being "derelict in its duty" in setting water standards, monitoring requirements and prescribing treatment methods.

- **January 7:** The EPA postpones for at least a year earlier plans to ban the use of pesticides where a particular chemical might threaten an endangered species. The original plan had called for pesticide container labels to list counties where such species existed.

- **January 13:** In a new proposal that could affect 2.3 million farm workers, the EPA says it is preparing to revise rules governing their exposure to pesticides. "It's weak in almost every area," Shelly Davis, a lawyer with the Migrant Legal Assistance Project, told the *New York Times*.

- **January 15:** The agency agrees to allow continued use of the pesticide dinoseb for at least two years, as long as inventories at the Cedar and Drexel corporations last. The move comes only months after the EPA had implemented an emergency ban—only its third ever on a pesticide—on dinoseb, which was shown to cause severe birth defects and sterility as well as brain and spine problems in animal tests. "Basically, the EPA made a backroom deal with the chemical companies," says Norma Greer of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides.

**Resume-builders:** Why the pell-mell rush to downplay toxic hazards? "Unless Jack Kemp gets elected, all the Reaganite ideologues are soon going to be out of work," says Will Collette, program developer for the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes in Arlington, Va. "These guys are basically getting their resumes in order, because their only constituency now is the companies they've been regulating where they expect to get future employment. So this is their last hurrah, a chance to leave the imprint of the 'Reagan revolution' on environmental policy. And it will become more pronounced as the year progresses."

Ralph Nader volunteers a similar assessment: "A lot of those people are cutting deals, getting ready to cut out and join big corporate firms." And Al Meyerhoff, a San Francisco-based attorney for the Natural Re-

sources Defense Council, bemoans, "This is a very disturbing pro-industry movement. How many more people will they kill in the meantime? You would think maybe they'd try to prevent a few more cancers in the waning hours rather than look out for their own futures."

Environmental groups across the nation are expressing similar outrage. And apparently, not everyone within the EPA is pleased about the policy-level changes, either. Barry Commoner, a prominent environmental author and director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Queens College, received a loud ovation when he recently took the EPA to task before a standing-room-only crowd of agency employees in Washington. Commoner is most alarmed about the re-evaluation of dioxin risks. "In the EPA's new report, they mention two other risk assessments which are 10 and 100 times higher than their 1985 study. They admit these are just as valid as any other, but don't include them in the average—which came out indicating a 16 times lower risk," Commoner says.

**Science vs. policy:** Hugh Kaufman, the EPA's assistant to the director of the hazardous site control division, says that Commoner forced the higher-ups to concede that the dioxin decision "is policy-driven, not science-driven."

Kaufman continues: "There are a number of issues where special-interest groups want us to back off. Obviously Agent Orange [the defoliant used in Vietnam of which dioxin is the key component] is one of these. Both the Carter and Reagan administrations have been dragging their heels in paying off victims of the Agent Orange situation. A second issue is the cost of cleaning up Superfund sites where dioxin is involved, and the concomitant financial liabilities of the companies that created the problem—the wood preservative manufacturers, Monsanto, Syntex and Dow. Finally, there is the drive by the manufacturers and builders of incinerators to diminish the dioxin issue. The weaker the regulations, clearly the better it

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"HERE'S HOW WE'LL HANDLE THIS BREAK-UP OF THE OZONE LAYER. WE'LL SIMPLY DOWNGRADE IT FROM "HIGHLY CARCINOGENIC" TO "MILDLY IRRITATING".

## Reagan's EPA: working on killer resumes



By Joel Bleifuss

## The Three Mile Island of 1957

The full story of the October 1957 fire at the Windscale nuclear plant (now known as Sellafield) in Cumbria County, England is still coming out. James Lewis reports in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* that the official report on the accident, released in early January, disclosed that then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had the government's investigation rewritten to downplay the seriousness of the accident. The Windscale fire released a radioactive cloud that contained more than 600 times more radioactive radio-iodine than that released at Three Mile Island. The report further says that radioactive milk, contaminated at up to three times the official danger level, was released for human consumption as was contaminated meat from lambs that grazed in the area. The details of the accident were not even made known to the ministers who have been in charge of British nuclear policy in the years since the accident. Lewis reports that Macmillan covered up the disaster because he "feared that confidence in the nuclear industry would be undermined, and that Britain's nuclear links with the U.S. would be jeopardized by revelations of serious defects in the organization of the Atomic Energy Authority, which ran the plant." According to a number of published reports, the area around the plant was heavily contaminated with radioactivity, especially polonium, a super-radioactive material used as the primer for nuclear bombs. One town of 2,000 near the plant has had 11 cases of childhood cancer since the accident, including five cases of childhood leukemia, according to reports. Throughout west Cumbria, the cancer incidence among males of all ages increased 30 percent between 1971 and 1984. And according to a preliminary report in *New Scientist*, a British publication, there could in the end be 1,200 cases of leukemia and 8,000 cancer deaths attributable to the Windscale disaster.

## Secrets of the empire

People for the American Way, a Washington-based liberal advocacy group, investigated the Reagan administration's use of executive powers and came to the conclusion that the U.S. has "a government operating in secret." The group's 100-page report, *Government Secrecy: Decisions Without Democracy*, opens with a preface by historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. He writes: "Secrecy is the bane of democracy because it is the enemy of accountability... The secrecy system, as it has been nurtured by the executive branch over the last 40 years and with special zeal over the last 7 years, is the indispensable ally and instrument of the imperial presidency." What has the imperial presidency of Ronald Reagan been up to? For starters the report's author, Steven L. Katz, writes that the Reagan administration has transcended the democratic process "to advance secretly its policy goals, issuing hundreds of secret laws—secret even from Congress." These laws made by executive order are called "National Security Decision Directives" (NSDDs). Some of these directives have been made public, though through no help of the administration. In 1981 Reagan sent, via an NSDD, an estimated \$50 million to the Argentine junta for covert training of the Nicaraguan contras. In 1983 he gave the CIA authority to train and support secret counterterrorist squads. These counterterrorists are to be used in "pre-emptive strikes" in the Middle East. In 1985 Reagan gave permission to agencies other than the CIA to conduct covert operations, agencies like the National Security Council of Iran-contra fame. In 1986 Reagan authorized the Libyan "disinformation" campaign. No one knows for sure exactly how many of these presidential edicts exist, but since he ascended to the throne, Reagan has issued at least 280 secret laws, about one every nine days. (In that same period he has held 42 press conferences, about one every 60 days.) How does he do it, this man who finds it impossible to converse without the aid of cue cards? More to the point, is it really Ronald Reagan who is issuing these executive directives?

## The numbers speak

*Common Cause Magazine* recently published the following statistics. The information was obtained from the Justice Department's "Public Integrity Section of Criminal Division Annual Report to Congress."

	1975	1985
Federal officials who are:		
indicted	53	563
convicted	43	470
awaiting trial	5	90



Indignant eyes: San Diego civic boosters condemn this poster as "tasteless," "offensive" and "inappropriate."

## Public art touches reactionary nerves in San Diego

SAN DIEGO—Is San Diego truly, as its official slogan proclaims, "America's Finest City"? Apparently not, if you're Mexican. That's the word from local artists, whose controversial poster dramatizes the plight of immigrant Mexican workers.

The poster was designed by three artists, Elizabeth Sisco, Louis Hock and David Avalo, who through their art depict the struggles of poor Mexicans living in this border region. Since January 3, their poster has been displayed on the backs of 100 city buses.

The images on the poster portray three scenes common in Southern California: a Mexican washing dishes in a restaurant; a Mexican maid entering a hotel room; and Immigration and Naturalization Service officials handcuffing Mexican immigrants. Across the top of the poster are the words, "Welcome to America's Finest Tourist Plantation."

This takeoff on the city slogan has enraged local residents and city officials.

"We wanted to make a completely unavoidable image," Louis Hock told the *San Diego Union*. In a city where a Mexican maid is a coveted symbol of affluence and where Mexicans are commonly referred to in the newspaper as "aliens," such a poster was bound to cause trouble.

The poster "is a tasteless parody of the slogan with a message that San Diegians have reason to find offensive," editorialized the notoriously right-wing *San Diego Union*. In the weeks since the poster appeared, over 15 have been vandalized or stolen.

Mayor Maureen O'Connor wants to make sure nothing like this happens again. She has proposed replacing COMBO, the arts organization that administered grant money for this public project, with a city-run commission on arts and culture that would approve all public art. City officials are particularly upset because the posters are scheduled to remain on the buses through January 31 when thousands of tourists arrive for the Super Bowl.

Like much of Southern California, San Diego is heavily dependent on tourist dollars and defense spending.

Most white residents remain happily oblivious to the problem of a growing Hispanic underclass.

"The poster was inappropriate to be displayed on city buses," says Paul Downey, press secretary for Mayor O'Connor. "It is offensive to the general community. Our office has received many calls about it, including some from minorities." As artist Elizabeth Sisco told the *Union*, "Certain subjects are taboo, negative for this city." Indeed one of artist David Avalo's previous projects that had been displayed at a government office building was ordered scrapped by a judge who didn't like it.

But, Julie Scaramella, spokeswoman for the Centro Cultural De Raza, where Avalo works, said "The city has really missed the boat on this. Here is their chance to say, 'Yes, we have some problems.' Instead they are overreacting."

Despite official condemnation, Scaramella says the Centro has been besieged by callers supporting the poster and requesting a copy. "We've gotten calls from all over the country," she says. "Several people have said they want a copy at any cost."

—Darcy DeMarco

## Switzerland's secret crusade against the gypsies

For almost half a century, Swiss authorities, in collusion with a private foundation set up to assist the Swiss youth, *Pro Juventute*, have secretly tried to eradicate the roving life of Switzerland's gypsies and, ultimately, the gypsies themselves as a distinct ethnic group. Between 1927 and 1973, the Swiss government, state governments and the board of *Pro Juventute* tried to forcibly settle Switzerland's gypsies. They regarded the gypsies' "nomadic" lifestyle as social evil. A "psychopathological behavior" that is "contrary to our Western civilized society" was how a man who now heads a psychiatric clinic in Chur, Switzerland, once put it.

land, once put it.

During the eradication effort, the benevolent-sounding organization *Kinder der Landstrasse* (Children of the Highways) took hundreds of children away from their gypsy parents. Whole families and clans were mercilessly torn apart. Many children and teen-agers, instead of being placed with "normal" families, were put in reform schools, psychiatric clinics and even, without having committed any crimes, in labor camps and prisons. Often the children's names were changed or they were given up for adoption without the knowledge of their gypsy parents.

The Swiss gypsies call themselves the "travelling people" or *Jenische*. They make a living mostly as door-to-door small merchants, by sharpening knives and scissors, by mak-

ing baskets and recycling trash. They live in campers, travelling from town to town, having to get a permission to stay for a few days at a time from the authorities of each town. Such a permission is often denied or only grudgingly granted with a lot of restrictions.

This official, but highly secret, policy of eradicating the "inferior" and "sick" gypsy way of life only came to an end when it was exposed by the Swiss magazine *Beobachter* in 1972. For the next 15 years, however, both the Swiss government and *Pro Juventute* kept silent on the whole affair. All the relevant official documents were kept under lock and key and no official apologies were made. It was only in 1986 that the Swiss government finally extended an official apology to the *Jenische*. It took *Pro Juventute*, after much prodding,



a year more to do likewise.

The government also finally allowed a Swiss historian, Thomas Huonker, limited access to the relevant documents so that he could write a historical study of this sordid affair. Even though Huonker could not examine the most important files, what he did find and then publish in his short study was damning enough. The historian revealed two months ago that in persecuting the gypsies, Swiss authorities collaborated closely with Nazi Germany, whose policy it was to eradicate all gypsies. For example, in 1936 Switzerland joined the "International Central Authority for Fighting Gypsy Mischief," an outfit created by the Nazi police to garner support from neighboring countries for the Nazi policy of gypsy extermination. Following the authority's guidelines, the Swiss government collected voluminous and highly detailed files on all Swiss *Jenische*.

The Swiss government's ideologi-

## Norwegian pacifists put bomb on docket

The signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in December banned U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles from the European land mass, but did nothing to limit the fearsome nuclear chess game being played out in the North Atlantic.

Peace activists are therefore delighted that the Norwegian pacifist monthly *Ikkevold* (Nonviolence) was recently cleared of spy charges after a four-year legal battle. "Much more than free speech is at stake," says Dorie Wilsnack of War Resisters International, with which *Ikkevold* is affiliated. "The *Ikkevold* people were really arrested for exposing the myth of Norwegian neutrality in America's enormous North Atlantic naval buildup."

The September 1983 article that got *Ikkevold* editors indicted disclosed the location of a U.S. submarine-detection base on Andoya Island in northern Norway. Because of its location barring the route Soviet submarines take to enter the Atlantic from their bases near Murmansk, the system would be on the front line of a wartime attack on the Soviet Union's Arctic forces.

A month after the article appeared, more than 50 officers of the national security police raided *Ikkevold's* office and the homes of its staff and carted off 400 pounds of files. The editors were charged with "damaging state security on an international level" by gathering and releasing secret information.

The raids were the first of their kind since the Nazis occupied Norway. In the weeks that followed Norway's press took up the story. Concern spread from journalists and lawyers to the whole population.

The affair was particularly curious because the existence of the Andoya network was no secret outside Nor-

cal justification for persecuting the *Jenische* was borrowed straight from Nazi race ideology that categorized the gypsies with such terms as "anti-social," "imbecile," and "parasitic." Huonker also discovered that *Pro Juventute's* former president, Gen. Ulrich Wille, and Alfred Siegfried, the man who headed *Kinder der Landstrasse* had close ties to Nazi officials like Robert Ritter, head of a Nazi gypsy "research" institute.

Moreover, the Swiss historian found evidence of the systematic mistreatment of *Jenische* by Swiss police, prison authorities and the personnel of state psychiatric hospitals. There are indications that in the infamous Bellechasse prison in Fribourg, where brutality against inmates was routine, there were a number of suspicious deaths among gypsy inmates. A similar case recently came to light in Zurich, and the Zurich government responded by putting the relevant documents under lock and key for 70 years.

way. For example, an article on anti-submarine warfare in the February 1981 *Scientific American* contains a map that clearly shows a submarine detection system in operation near Andoya.

Observers contended that the offending *Ikkevold* piece deeply embarrassed the government by exposing the permanent basing of foreign troops on Norwegian soil and the connection of these troops to U.S. nuclear forces. Nuclear weapons and foreign bases have been prohibited in Norway for decades. This prohibition served to both mute criticism of NATO membership and disengage the Norwegian public from the international debate over nuclear arms.

When the case was first heard in May 1985, seven *Ikkevold* staffers were found guilty. One editor, Ivar Johansen, was ordered to serve nine months in jail and fined \$1,200. The rest received suspended sentences. A Norwegian Court-ordered retrial in December 1986 resulted in the seven getting jail terms of from two to six months, with two years probation. But when it unanimously set

The federal government in Bern is not eager either to open up these files to public scrutiny. It has proposed setting up a commission to which the *Jenische* could apply for permission to look at the government's records. However, the *Jenische* would not be represented on the commission, and the commission would not have the final say. It could only recommend to the state governments that certain files be opened. The states would make the final decision. But how likely is it that the state governments that were part and parcel of the gypsies' persecution are going to allow full and free access to the relevant files?

For *Beobachter* magazine, this whole shameful affair raises an "exemplary and ever-fresh question: How do we treat minorities in our country when they can no longer be used for show, when they become inconvenient or when they attract unpleasant attention to everyday life?"

-Reto Pieth

aside these verdicts last August, the Supreme Court ruled that although the Andoya station was not common knowledge, the defendants had discovered its presence using "straight-forward journalistic methods." The judges further said this type of activity is "socially valuable and not criminal." The court concluded that "if the military wants to hold something secret, then it is up to the military to keep the secret....It cannot hold journalists accountable for uncovering such things."

Although legal problems have taken up much of the Norwegian War Resisters' time and energy over the last three years, Ivar Johansen is gratified by the results. "The central issue of critical journalism on defense and national security matters was examined," he says. "This is a good example that such a case can be won if you work hard."

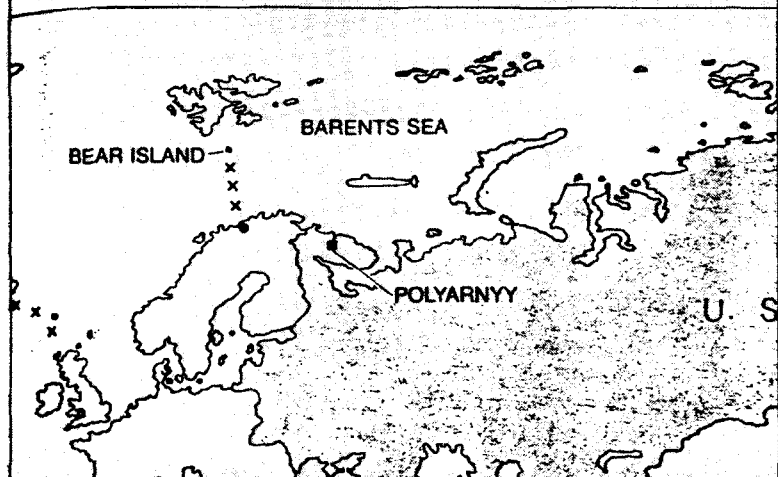
*Ikkevold* is now free to focus its energies on its "Bomb-Target Norway" campaign that stresses the risks Norway runs by participating in the North Atlantic arms race.

-David Gilden

**Some secret:** In 1983 Norwegian pacifists were taken to court for exposing the existence of a U.S. submarine-detection base. The base is shown here on a map published by *Scientific American* in 1981.

lines base... tropavlov... to surveillance while they are still in port, and they are also monitored on leaving port; at the same time, however, new patrol areas in the Sea of Okhotsk

marines is their low ra... Currently on any nor... percent of the Russia... (compared with the Ar



## Something to smile about

At the January 15 Democratic candidates' televised debate in Des Moines was a face that hasn't been seen much around Iowa—Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee. Having abandoned Iowa to the liberals, Gore has shifted the focus of his campaign to the more conservative South. "Al, it's good to see you back," said former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt. "You know I thought they might start putting your picture on milk cartons." A good jibe, but as the *Chicago Tribune's* Philip Lentz and Dorothy Collin observed, one that might "fall flat in Iowa where milk cartons were used as part of a nationwide attempt to find missing [Des Moines] *Register* newspaper boy Johnny Gosch."

## Let me count the ways

An Israeli Foreign Ministry official has said that his office, in response to criticism of Israel's handling of the Palestinian rebellion, has come up with a press release titled "Ten ways Israel is not like South Africa." The *New York Times's* John Kifner, who reported this, failed to elaborate. The Israeli Embassy in Washington was no help either. What are those "ten ways Israel is not like South Africa"? Remove the "not" and the question is a little easier to answer.

## How about 12 ways

There are of course differences between Israel and South Africa. But there are also disturbing similarities, which are giving some Jews in the U.S. cause to reexamine their formerly uncritical support of Israel. How are Israel and South Africa alike?

- 1.) In an attempt to quell public protests, both countries have sealed off communities and imposed curfews.
- 2.) Israel and South Africa both persecute journalists, limit press access to strife-torn areas and justify government censorship on national security grounds.
- 3.) Both governments forbid their ethnic opponents to display flags and other expressions of nationalism.
- 4.) The two countries both restrict the ability to hold funerals for those killed in the rebellion.
- 5.) In an attempt to control dissent, both Israel and South Africa operate a gulag of a judicial system. (Israel in its occupied territories.)
- 6.) The two countries have developed extensive, interlocking, weapons industries.
- 7.) Israel and South Africa have reportedly worked together to develop nuclear weapons.
- 8.) The economies of the two countries both depend on the labor of low-paid workers who are not allowed to live in the cities where they work.
- 9.) The rebellions in both countries are fueled by the rage of youth who believe they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. These young people are convinced that the more moderate resistance of their parents has accomplished nothing.
- 10.) Both Israel and South Africa have defied United Nations resolutions calling respectively for recognition of Palestinian rights and independence for Namibia.
- 11.) The two countries are surrounded by neighboring states ethnically related to the populations being suppressed. Both Israel and South Africa have been at war with their neighbors.
- 12.) Israel and South Africa both have gotten a lot of mileage out of identifying themselves as America's allies in the crusade against the two great evils—"international terrorism" and "world communism."

## Hi-tech behavior mod

"You're not working as fast as the person next to you," reads the message that flashes on the computer screen. Welcome to the brave new world of worker-control through subliminal suggestion. Arnold Hamilton of the *San Jose Mercury News* reported last fall on a new growth industry—software packages that help businesses manage their employees through subliminal messages. These messages are flashed upon video display terminals. Some of them exhort the worker to "relax," thereby lowering stress and upping productivity. Other of these subliminal suggestions, say Hamilton, "subtly offer positive slogans about the employer and the work place." Last fall, Democratic California Assemblyman Tom Hayden got the Democratic legislature to pass a bill that would have banned the use of subliminal messages that were not worker-approved. But Republican Gov. George Deukmejian supports free enterprise. He vetoed the proposal.



## Hart may deserve some heart, but he doesn't merit many votes

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

**W**HEN FORMER COLORADO SEN. GARY Hart re-entered the Democratic race for president last month, he was greeted with scorn and derision from the national media. The usually phlegmatic Jim Lehrer, the co-host of public television's *MacNeil/Lehrer NEWS-HOUR*, mercilessly badgered Hart about his sex life. The viperish Gail Sheehy, *Vanity Fair*'s lay analyst, meanwhile declared that

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Hart was doing it all for the money. And the *Washington Post*'s august David Broder blasted Hart for his unseemly ambition.

The media's unrelenting hostility stirred temporary sympathy for Hart. Many Americans are sick of the national press corps attempting to decide elections before they are held. But not even sympathy for the underdog is likely to rescue Hart's campaign from its journey to oblivion. It appears that Hart will not be able to overcome the substantial doubts about his character created by the Donna Rice incident. And as the January 15 Democratic debate in Des Moines showed, Hart will also suffer from being merely equal to, if not the inferior of, the other Democratic candidates.

Hart is now less interesting as a candidate than as a piece of political history. He will be remembered for his travails with the media but also for his contribution to Democratic politics.

**The role of the press:** Hart has been mistreated by that small coterie of prestigious publications that pride themselves on steering opinion. From the moment Hart announced his candidacy in April 1987, the press, led by the unlikely trio of the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Post* hounded him about the rumors of his womanizing and his persistent campaign debts.

*Newsweek* and the *Washington Post* reported rumors before they had confirmed them—a practice usually reserved for the *National Enquirer*. As the *Miami Herald* later acknowledged, the national press corps' preoccupation with Hart's personal life was behind the paper's decision to put a tail on Hart as if he were some crime lord engaged in drug-trafficking. And having uncovered what looked like a liaison, the media continued to trade on cheap sensationalism. For instance, reading the analyses of last June, one could hardly have anticipated that Hart's family would now be campaigning with him in New Hampshire and Iowa. This suggests a certain private complexity that the media can violate but can't comprehend.

The continuing stories about Hart's campaign debt are equally egregious. A few arti-

cles were certainly in order, including the *Miami Herald*'s recent revelations of possible illegalities, but not the steady stream of stories, nor the claim—made most recently by the *Post*'s Broder—that Hart's debts disqualify him from being taken seriously as a candidate. Democratic presidential candidates who go the distance have invariably had a difficult time paying off their campaign debts. In 1980, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) assumed the 1968 campaign debts of Hubert Humphrey, Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy. In 1984 the DNC was still trying to pay those debts off. Hart's remaining debt was a function of the vagaries of Democratic campaign finance and of his unusual 1984 campaign, in which he had to raise enormous sums in a short period of time. This economic shortfall has no bearing on Hart's judgment or character.

The media did not go after Hart because it objected to his politics or programs. Since Watergate, the national media has competed to see who can destroy leading political figures, whatever their political views. And to the extent that it lays off certain Washington insiders like President Reagan's chief-of-staff, Howard Baker, it was not likely to lay off Hart, the perpetual outsider.

**New ideas:** Hart has been repeatedly attacked and ridiculed for claiming that he has new ideas, but for contradictory reasons. Some old-guard Democrats charge that Hart was a media creation who has never had any ideas at all, while rival Democrats like former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt claim that Hart's

ideas were once new, but are now shared by many Democrats including himself. Babbitt is right and Hart's old-guard detractors are wrong.

The first, but less important, contribution Hart made has been to the debate over military spending. In the late '70s, he and aide William Lind helped pioneer the idea of military reform—that qualitative and not simply quantitative changes were needed in military spending. The concept eventually won over both Democrats and Republicans. The obscene excesses of Reagan's military budget have made reform less important than simple reduction, but the questions that Hart and Lind raised and that were popularized in James Fallows' *National Defense* will recur.

Hart's most important contribution, however, has been to champion a new economic policy that emphasizes the role of government in restructuring industry to achieve growth rather than simply in redistributing the fruits of growth more equitably. Hart, of course, was not the only Democrat to promote these concepts, but in the early '80s he

**The other Democratic candidates, sometimes drawing from Hart's "new ideas," outshined him in a recent debate.**

was the only presidential candidate to do so.

At the 1982 Democratic midterm convention in Philadelphia, Hart staged his own workshop with path-breaking economist Robert Reich and Fallows. In the 1984 campaign, he called for massive expenditures on education and worker retraining. He also proposed a new trade policy that demanded a *quid pro quo* from corporations that sought protection from imports. In the context of Carter-Mondale liberalism, these were genuinely new ideas.

In the beginning of the 1988 campaign, he introduced the idea of a strategic investment initiative. This approach, first suggested to Hart by former Jerry Brown aide Fred Branfman, was meant to contrast between Republican spending on a strategic defense initiative with Democratic support for civilian economic growth.

The economic program pushed by Hart sought to combine growth and equity. He argued that in a post-industrial economy providing workers with regular retraining and giving them a stake in business through employee ownership and worker control committees is essential to productivity and growth. Hart's program also shifted the focus of political debate from military competition with the Soviet Union to economic competition—from alleged military decline to genuine economic decline.

But other presidential candidates like Babbitt and Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis share these ideas. Democrats now see education not merely as a right to be guarded but as an essential part of building a new economic infrastructure. They see welfare not simply as a means of keeping the poor at bay, but of retraining workers. They are beginning to abandon the trade policy of the Carter-Mondale years that consisted in protecting industries without requiring them to restructure and renovate. And they are beginning to shift the political focus away from the Cold War toward peaceful economic competition.

**A sinner:** Hart's political failure is ultimately personal. As political consultant and former Hart adviser Patrick Caddell said after Hart's re-entry, Hart could only succeed in this election if he could show that he had learned something from the Donna Rice episode. But the impulses that drove Hart to lead a kind of double life—presidential candidate and reckless rake—now prevent him from overcoming his own past.

He has tried to explain away his behavior by erecting a distinction between public and private life. But at the same time the straight-laced Hart describes his private behavior in terms that invite condemnation of the man as a whole. "I am a sinner," Hart said at the Des Moines debate.

Hart's failure also reflects a certain Democratic success. Before the Des Moines debate, the big question was whether Hart would solidify his front-runner status in the poll by outshining the other candidates or whether he would be brought down to their level. Hart did fairly well in the debate—certainly better than he did during the 1984 debates with Walter Mondale—but the other candidates, sometimes drawing from Hart's "new ideas," showed that they have learned something over the last six months. By bringing themselves up to and beyond Hart's former level, they demonstrated that there is no justification for Hart's continuing candidacy. □



Steve Kagan



## By Roger Kerson

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

**R**AISING HIS VOICE, A DETERMINED LES LAZARUS looked out over the crowded meeting room.

"Will the people who came to be seated as delegates tonight please stand up?" he said, and 20 or 30 people in the back of the ballroom shuffled to their feet. If approved in this meeting to fill vacant Republican Party positions, those standing would have an important role in selecting Michigan's delegates to the 1988 Republican National Convention.

"Are we saying we don't want these people?" Lazarus continued. "It's somewhat smug and arrogant to tell these people to go away...If you vote no, you're telling these people...we don't care what you think. We just want our own little smoke-filled room filled with bigwigs to tell you whether you can vote."

Much of the crowd booed at that statement. And when the ballots were counted on the question of seating the new delegates, the boos had it—by one vote.

Lazarus was trying to seat delegates who support the presidential bid of evangelist Pat Robertson, at a local Republican convention in Washtenaw County, Michigan, and those who defeated him were George Bush supporters. The event was one tiny skirmish in 18 months of bitter political warfare that has pitted Robertson's evangelical Christian supporters against the pro-Bush Michigan Republican establishment, with conservative insurgents from the Jack Kemp campaign holding the balance of power.

Local political conventions are not usually events of great moment, but on January 14, some 9,500 Michigan Republican precinct delegates in 105 counties and congressional districts met to select 1,805 delegates to the party's state convention scheduled for January 29 and 30 in Grand Rapids. Those state delegates, in turn, will choose 77 delegates to the August 1988 Republican convention in New Orleans.

**Boiling point:** Bush, Robertson and Kemp have been jockeying fiercely for position in Michigan since early 1986, and legal disputes over party rules and delegate selection have been heating up for months. The pot boiled over on January 14, and nearly a third of the 105 district and county conventions split in two, as groups loyal to either Robertson or Bush went out and created their own rump conventions, claiming that bodies controlled by the other side weren't following the right rules.

The result is utter chaos. Twenty-eight hundred delegates were elected instead of 1,805, and nobody agrees on which ones really have the right to go to the state convention. Bush claims over 1,000 delegates; Robertson claims 848. Kemp's score ranges from 240 to 400 depending on who is doing the counting.

Kemp forces have been playing their cards carefully since August of 1986, when most of the 9,500 delegates who voted in county and district conventions were first elected. Robertson stunned political professionals by recruiting and electing over 4,000 delegates, more than 40 percent of the total. Bush also claimed a little more than 40 percent while Kemp maintained he had about 12 percent. Other Republican candidates did not compete in Michigan.

In order to gang up on front-runner Bush, Robertson and Kemp used their precinct delegate strength to elect a majority of the Republican State Central Committee, where



"A lot of the Christian right is looking at this as a Christian revolution," says one observer.

## Robertson "infiltrates" Michigan

they controlled key procedural votes that had important bearing on the eventual allocation of the state's 77 national convention

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delegates.

Bush fought back by taking his own party to court, where he won three key decisions to change delegate-selection rules.

Meanwhile, last month some Kemp representatives on the State Central Committee

swung over to the Bush camp during a last-minute procedural fight. After the confused local conventions of January 14, it looks as if the rest of the Kemp delegation may follow.

The state convention will doubtless mean a complicated credentials fight, and there may very well be two different delegations going to the Republican National Convention in August, each claiming to represent Michigan Republicans. Even with the final results unclear, it is nothing short of amazing that Robertson gave Bush a near-lethal scare in a state where moderates have historically controlled the Republican Party, and where Bush beat Reagan by a two-to-one margin in the 1980 Republican primary.

**The party's party is over:** The story

began to unfold in the spring of 1986, when Robertson combined the unquestioning faith of his supporters with questionable funding from a non-profit church-linked political organization (see accompanying story) to lay the groundwork for a major political upset.

"They went into churches and recruited delegates while party leaders were asleep," said Saul Anuzis, a Kemp supporter and a Republican aide in the state legislature.

The religious zeal of the Robertson recruits, he said, has made some traditional conservatives feel distinctly uncomfortable. "A lot of the Christian right is looking at this as a Christian revolution," he said. "Their leaders don't say that to you, of course," Anuzis explained, "because they're smart."

But many pro-Robertson precinct delegates speak of the need to return to "Godly principles." High on the list of humanist errors, they say, are court decisions prohibiting prayer. The First Amendment, they argue, merely prohibits the establishment of a state religion, but they insist it was not intended to create a permanent dividing line between religious and civil affairs.

"A lot of Christians say politics is dirty, don't get involved," said Robertson organizer Melissa Caulk. "I personally don't like a lot of what's going on in Michigan," she said, referring to the ongoing battles with pro-Bush forces. "But they're not going to scare me out of it."

Caulk, however, has scared a lot of Republicans in Washtenaw County, which lies at the western edge of the Detroit metropolitan area. The county's two largest cities are Ann Arbor, site of the University of Michigan, and Ypsilanti, which is surrounded by several large auto factories.

This is hardly a place you would think of as Pat Robertson country, but Christian conservatives now control the local Republican organization. The Christians have "infiltrated" the Republican Party, according to

*Continued on page 10*

## CBN's alleged money-laundering scheme was hardly the Christian thing to do

Pat Robertson's "stunning upset" in the August 1986 precinct delegate elections in Michigan, according to syndicated columnist Michael McManus, was achieved through use of a sophisticated, multimillion dollar political operation which drew most of its funds from the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN).

CBN, established by Robertson in 1960, runs a nationwide TV ministry and various related activities. As a religious institution, it is a tax-exempt organization and cannot legally make partisan political donations.

CBN can give money to other non-profit groups, and in 1981, Pat Robertson established a tax-exempt organization called the Freedom Council, intended as a non-profit educational group to help Christians get involved in politics.

By 1986, the Freedom Council was helping Christians get involved by recruiting them to run as precinct delegates in Michigan—delegates who would provide an important early boost to Robertson's presidential bid. The organization was also active in New Hampshire, Iowa and several other key early primary and caucus states.

McManus, who writes on ethics and religion issues, broke the story about Robertson, CBN and the Freedom Council in a series of columns starting in October of 1987. He became suspicious about reports of high spending by Robertson in

Michigan, so he filed a Freedom of Information Act request for tax returns from CBN and the Freedom Council. He discovered that between 1984 and 1986, CBN loaned or granted \$8.5 million to the council and to a related paper organization called the National Freedom Institute. The total budget of the two organizations during those years was \$11.5 million.

Citing two former top Freedom Council staffers, McManus says that almost one-third of that money—\$3.6 million—was spent in Michigan.

Robertson press aides do not deny that CBN gave \$8.5 million to the Freedom Council. But they firmly deny that \$3.6 million was spent in Michigan.

"They're on drugs," says Ben Waldman, Robertson's national press secretary. "No way. It can't be done." He argues that no political organization, partisan or not, could spend that much money in one state over a three-year period.

Waldman admits that the Freedom Council worked to recruit precinct delegates in Michigan, but he insists that the activity was entirely legal, because the council was non-partisan. Two hundred Christians were recruited as Democratic precinct delegates, he says, and no one ever asked the 4,000 Christians who were recruited as Republican delegates about their presidential preference—they were

merely encouraged to "get involved" in the process.

McManus doesn't buy that explanation. "They say their purpose is to prepare non-partisan materials to educate people about the democratic process," he said, quoting from the Freedom Council's 1985 tax returns. "They spent \$10,000 on 'materials' and \$1.93 million on management and consulting services, and massive amounts on travel, computers, consulting and postage...it looks like a campaign budget, the budget of a partisan organization."

The Freedom Council was disbanded in the fall of 1986 because of an impending IRS investigation, according to a former staffer who talked to McManus. But Waldman says the organization was closed because of bad publicity that suggested it was merely a front for the Robertson campaign.

The IRS will neither confirm nor deny that an investigation of the matter is underway, but Robertson aides acknowledge that agents have been "parked" at CBN for the past year. Since no charges have been filed, they say, the network must be off the hook. But an IRS spokesperson said that the length of an investigation is no indication of whether or not the law has been broken. Because campaign spending is involved, there could also be an inquiry by the Federal Election Commission. —R.K.



By Kathryn Phillips

LOS ANGELES

**O**CCASIONALLY SOMETHING HAPPENS TO suggest that maybe slick television ads, superficial mailings and nebulous positions don't win political campaigns.

For voters who feel they're capable of thinking and making reasonable decisions, these occasions are worth celebrating.

Lately, Californians—particularly the left variety—have had several chances to celebrate. From San Diego to San Francisco, candidates have recently been winning by employing what looks like old-fashioned grass-roots politics. They have been addressing issues in a detailed way, making direct contact with voters through corps of precinct volunteers and depending less on electronic media drives.

Art Agnos' December victory in the San Francisco mayoral race followed the latest and most daring of these grass-roots campaigns. Agnos' election bid employed tactics that offer the left hope about winning races based on issues and ideas. It also has attracted the attention of campaign consultants, political scientists and political observers who are now wondering how to translate the San Francisco tactics into statewide and national campaigns.

Some, like Sheldon Kamieniecki, a University of Southern California political scientist, believe the Agnos campaign may portend a new direction in politics. "I think that race might be sort of a bellwether, a sign that [grass-roots organizing] is coming back," he said.

**"Tired of the glitz":** Actually, grass roots never left. Volunteer-based campaign efforts have always been at the core of low-budget local elections. But in larger campaigns, candidates' increasing reliance on professional consultants has helped overshadow the power of grass-roots efforts. Television and radio advertising and direct mail have dominated, especially in California.

"When I first came out here, people told me it would be all TV and billboards," said Marcela Howell, who ran Los Angeles City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter's successful first-time council bid last spring. "But California campaigning is starting to change. I think people got tired...of the glitz."

Voters are showing signs of wanting to have more involvement in government and politics. In California, that sentiment has been displayed most with the rise of anti-development and slow-growth movements. Residents spontaneously have organized to protect their neighborhoods from incompatible new construction, and these neighborhood groups have been the natural start for grass-roots campaign organizing. In some cases they've spawned candidates for office.

Also, campaigns have gotten so expensive that a cheaper way to gather voter support—building local political organizations—has become attractive, sometimes essential. Yet even in high-spending campaigns, greater use of grass-roots organizing is surfacing.

**Grass-roots power:** In the last few years, important local campaigns in California have turned to grass-roots organizing to gain a critical edge.

Galanter, an urban planner and environmentalist, trounced a veteran Los Angeles City Council member last spring despite spending less than one-third of what her developer-backed opponent spent. Galanter ran on a controlled-growth platform and relied on one paid campaign staffer and about 880 volunteers.

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Art Agnos' mayoral campaign stressed substance over style—and it worked.

## Grass-roots organizing may be on the rise again

In San Diego, Democrat Maureen O'Connor lost her first bid for mayor in 1983 after spending about \$550,000—much of it her own money—on a campaign that relied mostly on mailings and other advertising. When she ran again three years later, she imposed a \$325,000 spending limit on her campaign, called in professional organizers and relied on 1,100 volunteers to walk precincts and work the telephone banks. This time she won.

Yet these efforts were not as dramatic or creative as Agnos' mayoral campaign. Agnos was a liberal Democratic assemblyman when he entered the race as an underdog behind John Molinari, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and a moderate-to-conservative Democrat.

As a state lawmaker Agnos has sponsored important social services and health legislation, including a pioneering bill protecting the confidentiality of people undergoing AIDS antibody testing. In San Francisco, he had joined the city's progressives in supporting a local proposition designed to control development, opposed allowing the Navy to dock the battleship *Missouri* there, and supported expanding rent control. Molinari and Agnos were at opposite poles on all these local issues.

Both candidates were heavily funded. Agnos spent about \$1.4 million, only slightly less than his opponent. But he spent his money more wisely. He hired a team of campaign consultants that included Larry Tramutola, a former United Farm Workers Union (UFW) official who is a master of

street-level campaign organizing, and Richie Ross, another UFW veteran and campaign consultant who has a reputation for using creative—if sometimes risky—tactics.

Agnos' consultants and paid campaign staff then spent the better part of the summer building a local organization that included about 500 precinct captains among a total of about 1,700 volunteers. The consultants and staff also spent the spring and summer helping Agnos develop one of the most ingenious and detailed pieces of campaign literature to come out of any political effort in recent memory.

**The book on "the book":** The piece was an 82-page book that in simple and sometimes sentimental terms laid out in his own words Agnos' history and ideas and plans

**There's new hope for the left. A number of candidates in California have been winning by employing what looks like old-fashioned grass-roots politics.**

for the city. "I'm going to make this a campaign on the issues. Sometimes you will agree with me. Sometimes you may disagree with me. But I'm not going to hide what I believe, and then surprise you after the election is over," Agnos wrote in the book's intro-

duction. "I hope this book will help you know more about me, my ideas, and my record."

Then Agnos ran through his record. He emphasized his ability to find new solutions for old problems, in part by building a consensus among disparate groups. He addressed each problem the city faces, from its \$87 million deficit to its crumbling sewer and

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road system, to the high cost of housing. He specified how he proposed to solve each problem. For example, he promised to revitalize the city's redevelopment agency as a force to provide affordable housing, and suggested the city could create a fund from building code violation fees to supplement down-payments allowing more San Franciscans to buy homes.

The book wasn't without faults. There were more ideas for ways to spend money than for ways to raise money to implement the new programs. Yet, it set a refreshingly open tone for the campaign. Moreover, it was delivered by hand to the city's voters through the campaign's grass-roots network. In a single weekend, said one campaign official, 150,000 books were delivered to doorsteps. By the end of the campaign, all but about 5,000 of the 225,000 printed (at a cost of about 25 cents each) were passed out. In addition, signs posted around town by the campaign stated simply, "Please Read My Book.—Art Agnos."

The book became a topic of conversation. It amused the city's wags and hardened political cynics. It became the target of specific and sometimes nasty attacks by Molinari. But voters seemed to love it.

"People took it a lot more seriously than we thought," said C.J. Maupin, an Agnos campaign official. The campaign received lots of mail responding to the book, she said. Typically, the letters would remark on specific passages buried inside, suggesting that people were actually reading it. When ballots were tallied in the December runoff election, Agnos carried 70 percent of the vote, including conservative neighborhoods the campaign never expected to win.

**The big picture:** Could a similar combination of grass-roots organizing and bold issue-oriented literature work on a statewide or national campaign? Political consultants are already considering that question in the aftermath of Agnos' success. Generally, opinion is split. There are some signs of increasing reliance on grass-roots organizing in national campaigns, with Jesse Jackson leading the way. But while the left and liberal politicians tend to rely more on popular organizing and tend to do better at the polls when there is a large turnout generated by this activity, they don't have a monopoly on it. Conservative evangelist Pat Robertson, for instance, has already shown a knack for generating activity through a network of churches (see story on page 7).

"Where the grass-roots campaign works is where the candidate totally buys into the grass-roots commitment," said Agnos consultant Tramutola. That means treating volunteers with respect, assuming voters have dignity and intelligence, and understanding the whole process of representative government. □



By William Gasperini

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

**T**HE ORIGINAL IDEA FOR GATHERING CENTRAL American presidents together to discuss regional problems belongs to Guatemalan President Vinicio Cerezo, who convened the first summit in Esquipulas, Guatemala, in May 1986.

One year later Costa Rica's Oscar Arias Sanchez took up the mantle and brought success to the August 7 Guatemala City meeting, dubbed "Esquipulas II." The Costa Rican

## CENTRAL AMERICA

president picked up the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

But if the third summit, held in San Jose this month, "belonged" to anyone, it was El Salvador President Jose Napoleon Duarte. The term "dominated" would in fact be more apt.

**"Zero hour":** From the moment of his arrival in Costa Rica, the loquacious Salvadoran leader set the tone for the summit, which many had thought would turn into a requiem for the regional peace process. "We have reached the zero hour," he declared. "I've come to tell the truth at this meeting, of who has and who has not complied with the agreement. Commitment is commitment. Nicaragua has not complied. Nicaragua is only excuses."

Over the next 48 hours, Duarte—backed by malleable, grandfatherly Jose Azcona of Honduras and Arias himself—did not budge from this stand. With the threat of a February vote on new contra funding in the U.S. Congress overshadowing the affair, the various leaders knew Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega was vulnerable. And in the end, Ortega agreed to a number of concessions, including direct negotiations with the contras.

"The steps he has agreed to are a good signal, and maybe tomorrow he will do more," Duarte expounded after it was all over. "He still has not complied fully, and for me that's OK. When he is ready I will be there waiting for him. The future of peace in Nicaragua and Central America is in his hands."

Never mind that Duarte himself has failed to reach a cease-fire agreement in his own country, and now demands that the rebel

**Salvadoran President Duarte led the pressure for Nicaraguan concessions. Never mind that his own country is not living up to the regional peace treaty.**

FMLN guerrillas lay down their arms before any renewal of peace talks as required under the treaty. Never mind that his country's version of amnesty released hundreds of former military and death squad members, an action that even rankled Washington by including assassins of two American land-reform officials. Never mind that Guatemala has also failed to reach any cease-fire with members of the oldest of Central America's insurgencies.



Ortega meets the press: Nicaragua agreed to meet directly with the contras, lift the state of emergency and grant an amnesty.

## U.S. shadows peace talks: Nicaragua finds no shade

But most importantly, never mind the fact that the final San Jose document contains no guarantees Nicaragua's neighbors will prevent the contras from using their territories, as specified in the peace plan. Instead, Nicaragua must rely on the other presidents' word of honor.

**Nicaraguan concessions:** Ortega finally capitulated on his long-held refusal to talk

directly with the contras, agreeing to include a Nicaraguan on a team of foreign advisers—including two U.S. lawyers and a German politician—in a new round of cease-fire talks. He also agreed to lift the state of emergency declared in 1982, which restricts civil liberties, and agreed to amnesty for political prisoners.

Nicaragua said the amnesty will occur

when a cease-fire is reached and the contras "agree to incorporate into the civil sector," an unlikely set of events.

But should the cease-fire talks fail, Ortega said the political prisoners will still be released. It is estimated that 3,000 prisoners—including nearly 2,000 ex-National Guardsmen of the Somoza regime—would be granted amnesty. Ortega insists, however, that those released would go to other countries, perhaps the U.S., "until the war ends."

Skeptics including Duarte immediately blasted this plan as merely "exchanging prison for exile." But in Managua's view, releasing the prisoners inside Nicaragua would

*Continued on page 10*

## Will Nicaragua's new look turn on the U.S. Congress?

The Central American peace process has turned into a beauty contest, with the U.S. Congress as judge and Nicaragua as the sole contestant. Unless the Sandinista government lives up to Washington's ever-changing standards, the prize will once again go to President Reagan's longtime heartthrob, the contras.

In the first week of February, the U.S. Congress is set to vote on a multimillion dollar aid package for the Nicaraguan rebels. It will be the first up-or-down vote for new contra aid since the Iran-contra scandal broke in November, 1986. But revelations of illegal support for the contras have been eclipsed by the peace agreement signed by the five Central American presidents last August.

Despite the treaty's clear injunction against outside support for insurgents, the Reagan administration has managed to frame the debate in terms of whether the "freedom fighters" will help or hinder the peace process.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's January 16 concessions (see accompanying story) threw the administration somewhat off track. Ortega agreed to do precisely those things called for by the administration: lift the state of emergency, grant an amnesty and meet face-to-face with the contras.

But the Nicaraguan leader's move entails serious political risks. Now, more than ever, the contras can be painted as part of the solution and not, as envisioned by the Central American peace agreement, part of the problem.

Reagan originally presented the contras as a means of "pressure" for Nicaraguan reforms. Now the White House is portraying the contras as "insurance" that will keep the Nicaraguans from going back on their promises.

The direct talks, scheduled to begin less than a week before the aid vote, will undoubtedly strengthen the position of contra supporters. "Congress will not cut the contras off at the start or in the middle of cease-fire negotiations," predicts Segundo Mercado-Llorens of the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy. These talks can drag out indefinitely, since the contras will never agree to a cease-fire that might cost them their funding.

The White House is skilled at manipulating lawmakers who want to appear both pro-peace and anti-Sandinista. As *In These Times* went to press, Reagan was expected to present a \$50 million-\$100 million funding package that includes such cosmetic compromises as an escrow fund (that puts a percentage of contra aid on hold until the president thinks it's needed) and

"humanitarian" as opposed to lethal aid.

These ploys may work in the Senate. But the House Democratic leadership says it will reject any such gimmicks. And the numbers are on the anti-contra forces' side. About 190 representatives generally vote against aid, which means that they need only about a third of the undecided House members to swing a majority.

The fence-sitters may also find it difficult to use their conventional excuse, that they are voting for contra aid to promote democracy. "If further contra aid is voted, you will not have more democracy, you will have less," warns Paul Reichler, a U.S. lawyer who represents Nicaragua in the cease-fire talks. Nicaragua is prepared to crack down if it is clear that only a military solution is possible.

Whether or not contra aid is approved, it may be that Reagan has already won a larger victory. By pressing Nicaragua for concessions, the Democrats have conceded the administration's right to intervene in the internal politics of other countries.

"I think in the short term we might win on contra aid," says Betsy Cohn of the Central American Historical Institute, "but in the long term sovereignty has gone down the drain."

—Jim Naureckas



## EPA

Continued from page 3  
is for all of them."

Walsh, of U.S. PIRG says that EPA officials are corrupting science. If you change science into policy, it's stepping to the brink of double-speak. The hook I think is for Congress to realize that all their hard work in developing tougher laws is just being thrown out the window. The EPA and this administration are just thumbing their noses at them."

**Toxic bureaucracy:** A recent congressional study indicates the nation may have to spend \$22.7 billion cleaning up hazardous waste sites that were supposedly already operating under strict environmental regulation. This is more than double what the Congress has designated for the monumental cleanup program of abandoned waste dumps. The congressional report cites another study, by the government's General Accounting Office, that says the U.S. may have as many as 425,380 potential hazardous waste sites.

That staggering figure is being obfuscated in every way possible by the EPA. At the 900-some acknowledged Superfund sites, despite a much tougher congressional mandate, the agency's policy can only be described as inconsistent at best. Consider that, at a Kentucky site, the agency declared an acceptable level of certain extremely toxic chemical wastes to be only one part per million—while in Louisiana, a cleanup of the same material permitted human exposure as high as 1,300 parts per million. To induce company officials at an Arkansas facility into voluntary compliance with the law, the EPA accepted an increased cancer risk to the local population ten times as high as the level it established prior to the negotiations.

Now, according to U.S. PIRG's Walsh, the agency's national contingency plan for Superfund, due to be revised by April, will

seek to defer listing sites that it claims will be addressed under other statutes. The prime examples are the 1,000-some pesticide contamination sites being considered for cleanup, which the EPA says would be properly addressed under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Unfortunately, nothing in FIFRA provides for cleanup. "They're defining away the problem so the numbers look better and the reality of the situation just slips by everyone's grasp," says Walsh.

**The buck that doesn't stop:** In the cases of pesticides like alachlor and dinoseb, the EPA has acquiesced to industry claims that abolishing these materials would trigger losses in agricultural productivity. "The agency for many years has been at a standstill on pesticides," says Jay Feldman, director of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides in Washington. Feldman says the agency is "simply not regulating and allowing the status quo to go forward—which translates into continued poisoning."

Environmental advocates say the EPA assumes that alternatives to dangerous chemicals do not exist. Alachlor, for example, is an herbicide used in no-till farming, which has been promoted by the government as a means for controlling soil erosion. The EPA doesn't seem to take into consideration non-chemical approaches, including inter-cropping and cover cropping, which have successfully worked across the country.

Indeed, as a recent Greenpeace report on dioxin notes, "Under the pesticide law, EPA could only cancel product registration if the risks outweighed the benefits. In theory the pesticide law's 'risk-benefit analysis' requires that a dollar's worth of economic benefits outweighs 98 cents worth of cancer."

That seems to be the EPA's "bottom line"—the buck doesn't stop, and the price is human life.

**Dick Russell** is a freelance writer who contributes frequently to *In These Times*.

## Robertson

Continued from page 7

Peg Molin, a Bush supporter who said she has been involved in Republican politics "since Eisenhower."

"They sent invitations to every church in the county," Molin told the *Ann Arbor News* in December, after Robertson was invited to town for a fund-raiser to benefit the county party organization. "That's not soliciting Republicans."

"To a lot of people in the local Republican Party we're like a bad dream," laughed Pastor

Mike Caulk, who has joined his wife Melissa as a Pat Robertson activist. "When Pat is no longer running for president, they think we're going to go away, but we're not. They have to make room for this group of people."

Christians have a responsibility to get involved in social issues, he said, or else a "moral vacuum" is created. Up until now, he says, "We've abandoned the political process to people who don't share our values."

"I'm not talking about a Christian republic," he says. "That's not realistic. You can't make people be Christians—but you can make them obey the law."

## POLICING DESIRE

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"It doesn't take that many people... We got involved in the civil government just 18 months ago, and we've already changed the face of the Republican Party. Look at the Marxists. They started out in 1917 with a very small group, and now they control what—40 percent of the world's population?"

After seeing Robertson's guerrilla tactics at work in Michigan, Bush and other Republicans know that he can be a serious competitor, especially in states that use caucus and convention systems. They will obviously play serious hardball to keep Robertson in check—but if they play too rough, they risk making it too hard for born-again voters to vote Republican in November.

**The Christian albatross:** Ironically, the more effective Robertson is in using his organizational strength to confound his fellow Republicans, the more he becomes an albatross that Democrats can hang around the neck of the eventual GOP candidate.

A May 1987 poll by the Mitchell Group, a GOP polling firm, found that 57 percent of registered voters in Michigan were less likely to vote for Republican candidates if they knew of "heavy involvement and participation in the Michigan Republican Party by evangelical Christians."

Republican candidates probably feel about Pat Robertson the way some Democrats feel about Jesse Jackson. They want to avoid getting too close to a candidate who might offend mainstream voters—but they don't want to be too far away from someone who champions one of their party's most loyal voting blocs.

According to a recent survey conducted for the Times Mirror Company by the Gallup

Organization, "moral Republicans," a voting bloc that includes a heavy proportion of born-again, represent nearly half of the 30 percent of likely voters who are committed Republicans.

But this "moral Republican" camp doesn't translate into instant Robertson votes. In fact, the Gallup/Times Mirror poll ascribes Bush's lead in the polls to his high level of support from "moralists."

**The wildest card:** The eventual effect of Robertson's tenacious two-year campaign in Michigan remains to be seen. On the plus side for the Republican Party, he has left behind thousands of new party activists, some of whom may stay on to get involved in local and state races. On the minus side, he has left behind a deeply fractured party, with established Republican activists muttering angrily about "infiltration" and the "Christian revolution."

With single-digit support in the polls, a double-digit campaign war chest—he has raised \$12 million so far—and a solid network of evangelical supporters who can be mobilized in each of the 50 states, Robertson may be the wildest card in this year's presidential deck.

But if his Christian supporters continue to wage holy war against Republicans who are backing other candidates, Robertson may accomplish little except to split apart the electoral coalition between social and economic conservatives which has worked so well for Ronald Reagan.

If that turns out to be the case, Robertson might pull off a very real miracle: he could help the long-suffering Democrats win the 1988 presidential election.

**Roger Kerson** is a Michigan-based journalist.

## Peace

Continued from page 9

likely just swell the contra ranks.

**Washington's shadow:** Whether these steps will be sufficient to convince critics, especially dubious U.S. Congress members, (see accompanying story) is unclear. In a sense, Washington's shadow loomed not only over Nicaragua but the other four as well, after whirlwind visits from Elliott Abrams, National Security Adviser Colin Powell and envoy Morris Busby the week before the summit. While Arias denied any arm-twisting, the Reagan officials made it clear that economic aid would likely be affected should the contra policy fail. They also wanted assurances no major surprises would result from San Jose, as when the peace plan was signed in Guatemala last August.

Assessing the final results, Arias stressed that "Central America has demonstrated that dialogue never fails, if there is political will." Clearly satisfied that his plan had not collapsed, Arias said the meeting showed that "the destiny of Central America is in our own hands."

Despite the verbiage, Arias could not dispel the reality that Central America clearly is not wholly in control of its own destiny. While Ortega sought to counter Duarte by stating the Salvadoran's economic and military dependence on the U.S. accounted for his intransigence, neither could the Nicaraguan leader escape the absolute necessity to stay Congress from voting new aid.

All but Azcona also spoke to the February vote on Capitol Hill. Cerezo was the only leader affirming that Washington "should read the accords and respect them" by not approving new money to the contras. Duarte implied there would be no need for new

money if Nicaragua abided fully with the agreement, and as is his custom coupled the call with one to the Soviet Union and Cuba to cease supporting the FMLN. Throughout the weekend Duarte also railed at Ortega over Managua's supposed complicity in assisting the guerrillas, charges Ortega consistently denied.

Arias, meanwhile, termed the aid vote as "solely an internal congressional affair." Honduras' Azcona made a quick exit from the summit before being asked what concrete steps he might take about the contras' presence, although in the days prior to the meeting he indicated the border region might be open to inspection if other countries agreed to the same.

**No verdict in:** The final San Jose document carries no new timetable or plans for further summit meetings, a fact Arias downplayed by saying new encounters would happen "when deemed necessary." The decision to comply immediately with the plan's steps, he said, negated the need for a timeline and did not mean the treaty would terminate should full compliance not become a reality. After his return to Managua, Ortega called for a new meeting February 7 in El Salvador.

Overall, the proclamation is sufficiently vague as to indicate its role as the lowest common denominator between men of such disparate ideologies. Acknowledging their "historic responsibility," the presidents conclude by saying they "remain conscious it will be their peoples and the international community who will judge the compliance of these obligations agreed to in good faith." That finale may be as good an epitaph as any on whether the San Jose meeting will further the peace process begun in May 1986.

**William Gasperini** is *In These Times'* Nicaragua correspondent.



By Rachel Sternberg

MEXICO CITY

**T**HE MAN KNOWN AS THE FATHER OF MEXICO'S first, and still unfinished, nuclear power plant scoffs at the "world psychosis" that makes people fear fission. "Everything labelled 'atomic' has a negative connotation," he complains, adding that although a recent bus mishap in this capital claimed more lives than the accident at Chernobyl has so far, no one is protesting against buses.

This argument went unchallenged at a December news conference with Juan Eibenschutz, subdirector of the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE). Perhaps reporters were simply too stunned to respond. Otherwise they might have pointed out that the bus accident, unlike Chernobyl, did not produce clouds of radioactivity, and that in fact there was a protest—against the inept and indifferent governance that put an overcrowded city bus on an unpaved road next to the sewage lake into which the vehicle plunged. What worries Mexicans is that the government will be just as slipshod at its new nuclear power plant.

The Laguna Verde plant, located on the Gulf coast 45 miles from the port of Veracruz and 180 miles from Mexico City, has two units equipped with General Electric boiling water reactors (BWRs). Unit Two is only half done, but Unit One is virtually ready to go. The fuel, enriched uranium, is inside the facility and the CFE is waiting for the National Commission on Nuclear Security and Safeguards to give it permission to load. Six to eight months of testing would follow.

If all goes well, the plant would then enter into commercial operation. But the thought of Laguna Verde going on-line has spurred an uncharacteristic wave of protests from Mexicans worried about ecological disaster.

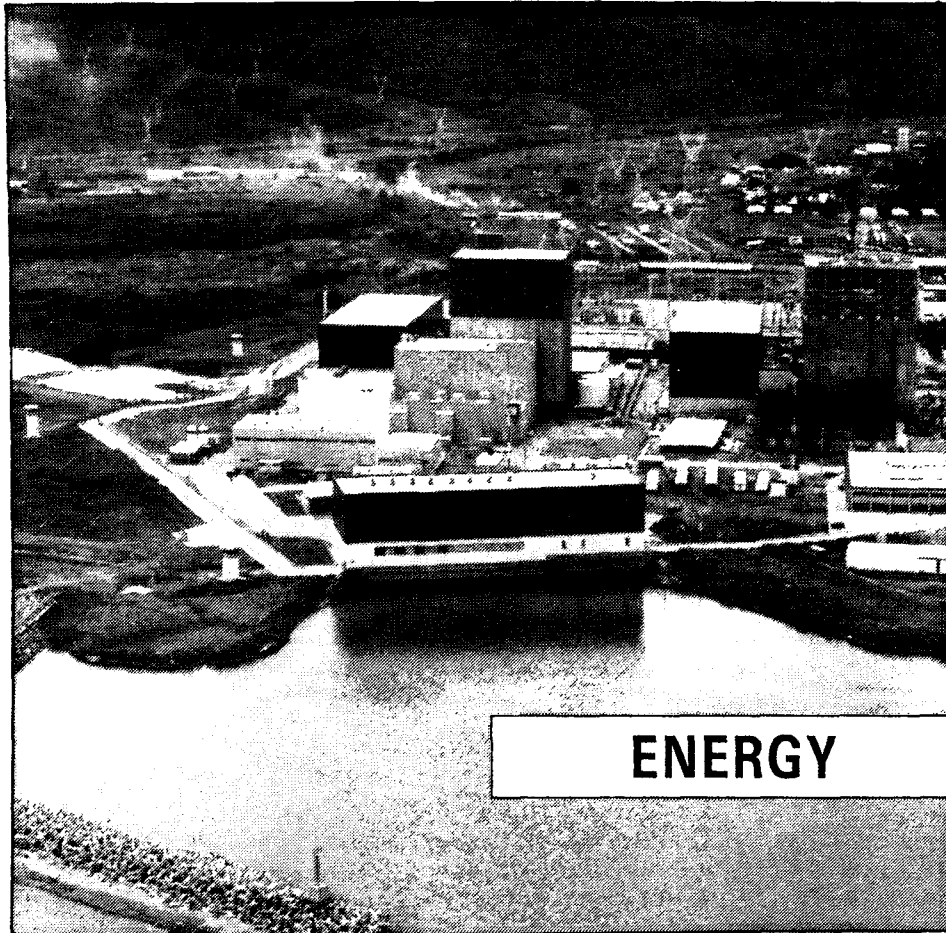
**Rising costs:** In economic terms, Laguna Verde is already something of a disaster. When Eibenschutz and his colleagues hatched plans for the project more than 20 years ago, they thought it would cost \$128 million. By the time construction began, their estimate had risen to \$550 million. They now admit that some \$2.1 billion has been spent—or \$3.5 billion counting the financing costs. Officially it will take another \$177 million to complete the project.

At any rate, it is clear that CFE Director General Fernando Hiriart Balderrama was less than candid in October 1987 when he told the Chamber of Deputies that the investment, in real terms, has been "more than twice that originally foreseen." Other government figures suggest the factor is three. Meanwhile ecologists who add in future costs of radioactive waste management and plant dismantlement predict that Laguna Verde will never pay for itself despite earnings from the oil it frees up for export.

Cost overruns cannot be blamed on the project's opposition, which lacks the legal means to stymie plant construction. There have been no court cases, no public regulatory hearings. True, the government has had to fund a major promotional campaign, but the real problem is that Mexico has had to pay for much of the materials, technology and training with precious foreign exchange. Even the educational film shown to visitors at Laguna Verde was made in the U.S.—by Walt Disney—and dubbed into Spanish.

"When Mexico decided to build a nuclear power plant, no scientific and technical infrastructure had developed capable of managing the project," says Jacinto Viqueira

# Mexico burns up money to fuel nuclear power plant



ENERGY

Laguna Verde: \$3.5 billion for an unopened nuclear plant.

Landa, who served the CFE as planning director from 1974 to 1976. "All the problems stem from that. It was necessary to buy everything abroad, to entrust the project to a U.S. company, to depend greatly on other countries." He and other critics point out that Laguna Verde will remain at the mercy of foreign goodwill even after its start-up because Mexico has uranium but no way to enrich it at home.

**Safety worries:** But safety is the public's main concern. Two fairly recent disasters have done little to inspire confidence in state-run projects, where widespread corruption often leads to shoddy construction. In the devastating 1985 earthquakes, 70 percent of the Mexico City high-rises that collapsed were government-built, and the state oil monopoly PEMEX was responsible for the 1984 gas explosion that killed 550 people in a crowded slum.

If conventional public works are riddled with errors, the skeptics say, why should the nuclear plant be any better? How can one hope for quality control and continuity when countless contractors and laborers have passed through the site under the leadership of eight different directors? Surely the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) cannot inspect every valve.

As it is, an internal IAEA memo last March documented the flooding of Unit One's secondary container with sea water and the unprogrammed start-up of a diesel generator. These incidents, the report says, "have no dramatic consequences for the project but illustrate a dangerous haste in the conduct of pre-operational tests and an imperfect interface between the different organizations within the CFE."

The reactor, a General Electric BWR Mark II, has stirred controversy both here and in the U.S. because of alleged design faults. "None of the world's nuclear technology now in use is intrinsically safe," says Jose Arias

Chavez, a member of the Pact of Ecology Groups, "but this General Electric reactor is worse." In the event of a ruptured pipe, steam pressure could build to levels greater than the building is able to withstand, according to former U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission official Richard Pollard. CFE officials call such criticisms unfounded.

Yet the list of objections goes on and on. The site is seismically active, ecologists say, and a dormant volcano lies nearby. The dominant winds blow inland from the Gulf, undermining CFE assurances that even the worst possible accident at Laguna Verde could not affect anyone outside the 16-kilometer emergency zone. The problem of radioactive waste disposal has not yet been solved, here or anywhere else. "Let's say I need glasses for driving but I don't put them on," says Arias Chavez. "It's night, and it's raining, and the windshield wipers don't work, and the headlights fail and the brakes are bad and I am drunk. It's equivalent to this. Laguna Verde is a collection of risks unique in the world."

**Fighting fission:** The popular movement against the plant took off after the April 1986 accident at Chernobyl, although small numbers of people spoke out against it in the late '70s and early '80s. Opposition is strongest in Mexico City and the state of Veracruz, where dozens of groups have repeatedly marched on the plant. In February 1987 they also orchestrated a protest in the city of Cordoba during which homes and businesses shut off their lights for 10 minutes.

The anti-plant movement encompasses artists, middle-class housewives, Roman Catholic clergy including an archbishop, and reportedly the governor of the state. Local farmers and fishermen, concerned that even a slight release of radioactivity will ruin their businesses, have also joined in. They note that under 1976 legislation the total maximum indemnity for all losses, as

guaranteed by the government, is 100 million pesos—less than \$50,000 at today's exchange rate.

"Once again we confront a fundamental lack of governmental democracy," says Homero Aridjis, president of the Group of 100 Artists and Intellectuals. "A few technocrats decide the destiny of a region and of a population....It's very much in keeping with the (ruling) Revolutionary Institutional Party, which is totally arbitrary."

His and other groups are demanding a statewide if not nationwide referendum to decide the issue. This is legally possible under the Mexican constitution but has never been done, according to Manuel Fernandez, president of the Mexican Conservationist Federation. "In Mexico, everything seems inevitable," Fernandez says. "But what's certain is that this is the first time in Mexico that a development project has been questioned beforehand. People's attitudes have really changed. They are realizing that a project that is supposedly designed to improve their standard of living is actually putting their lives in danger."

**An uncorrected error:** No one is more surprised than the CFE, which entered into the project during a more optimistic age. "We simply wanted to be modern," recalls former CFE official Viqueira Landa. "People who had studied the technology wanted to apply it. We thought it might be a good option that shouldn't be wasted—and we were wrong. The bad thing is that the error hasn't been corrected."

The CFE's basic argument for Laguna Verde is that Mexico must diversify energy sources before its oil and gas reserves start to run out. And prior to 1973, while Mexico was still a net importer of oil, nuclear power must have seemed the perfect solution to the nation's rising energy needs. Planners once pictured anywhere from 12 to 20 nuclear power plants dotting the Mexican countryside by the year 2000. That dream faded quickly with the onset of economic crisis in 1982. All that remains is Laguna Verde and even with both 654-megawatt units on-line, it would meet less than 3 percent of current annual consumption.

Viqueira Landa argues that Laguna Verde should be turned into a natural gas-based power plant that would generate more electricity than a nuclear plant over a greater number of years. The conversion, which is technically feasible, would cost about \$500 million. The anti-nuclear forces call that a bargain, but the CFE maintains that it would be cheaper to start such a plant from scratch.

The CFE's Eibenschutz says that neither he nor Mexico's president will make the final decision on Laguna Verde. But plant opponents are anxiously watching Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the ruling party candidate in this July's elections, for signs that he might back away from putting it into operation.

Could popular pressure call a halt to Laguna Verde?

"If you had asked me that two years ago, I would have said no, because never did I imagine that the movement against Laguna Verde could gain so much strength," says Viqueira Landa. "I think it is a unique case in Mexico—that a popular movement gains so much force and obliges the government to take certain measures, like propaganda and more rigorous tests. Yes, it has had an impact. A sufficient impact to change the final decision? I don't know." □

Rachel Sternberg is a Mexico City-based freelance writer and a former *In Short* editor of *In These Times*.

IN THESE TIMES JAN. 27-FEB. 2, 1988 11



**A**S THE TWO-PARENT, SINGLE-INCOME family goes the way of the hula hoop, the federal government is being forced to develop labor laws that support the new American family—households with a single parent or two working parents. Balancing their needs against those of the business community will be the central issue next month when Congress begins debates over the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). While most observers predict the bill will be approved, both supporters and opponents think FMLA will force Congress to examine a full range of family-related employment benefits.

The FMLA guarantees job security to any worker taking up to 10 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn, newly adopted or seriously ill child. It also guarantees job security, seniority and health benefits to any worker taking up to 15 weeks of unpaid leave to recover from a serious medical condition, and the House version includes a 10-week, family-leave provision for the care of a seriously ill parent.

Under a final compromise reached by members of the House labor management subcommittee in October, businesses with fewer than 50 employees would be exempt in the first three years after enactment, and those with fewer than 35 would be exempt thereafter. With this exemption, the General Accounting Office (GAO)—Congress' investigative arm—estimates the bill would cover slightly less than half of the U.S. workforce.

Fred Feinstein, a legislative assistant for one of FMLA's co-sponsors, Rep. William L. Clay (D-MO), says the small business exemption was needed to get the bill through committee. "We were obviously distressed about the exemption," Feinstein says. "But our feeling is that it makes sense to establish a principle, to make this a viable political issue. If we didn't do this (compromise), the bill wouldn't have gone anywhere."

He adds that less than 40 percent of American businesses currently provide some form of maternity leave. The businesses with a leave policy tend to be large companies, the same businesses that would be affected by FMLA. But Feinstein points out that most large companies provide minimal leave, covering fewer people and offering shorter leave periods than would be mandated in FMLA.

Bill supporters acknowledge that FMLA will not affect most workers since small businesses are exempt and few workers can afford to take an unpaid leave. Job security and the guarantee of continued health insurance during the leave time are the bill's selling points.

Compared to some of the other family-related employment issues, such as day care (see accompanying story) and paid maternity or paternity leave, FMLA provides a minimal benefit. But the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, leading the opposition to FMLA, argues that the bill, if enacted, would lead to more far-reaching and costly benefits. As Fred Krebs, director of employment relations policy for the chamber, says "The real issue is the cumulative effect (of FMLA)."

Donna Lenhoff, associate director for legal policy and programs for the Women's Legal Defense Fund, agrees. She says that FMLA is only a beginning, one that supporters believe is achievable. In the next few years she says that women's

legislating  
unpaid  
leave  
by  
maggie  
garb

groups, unions and other supporters of the bill will push for mandated paid leaves and subsidized child care. Many FMLA supporters are also backing the Act for Better Child Care which Congress will vote on this year.

**One small step:** "This bill (FMLA) is just a step toward abolishing some of the discrimination women face in the workplace," Lenhoff says. "Historically, denial or curtailment of women's employment opportunities has been traceable directly to the pervasive presumption that

In terms of legislated parental or maternity leave, the U.S. has fallen far behind the rest of the industrialized world. Japan mandates 12 weeks of parental leave at 60 percent of normal pay; West Germany requires 14 to 26 weeks at 100 percent. More than 120 countries worldwide have some form of parental or maternity leave.

women's place is in the home. But for most women this is no longer economically feasible. And this ideology about women's roles has justified discrimination against women when they do work."

Although 35 years ago less than 30 percent of American women worked outside the home, today nearly 55 percent do, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor. In addition, 63 percent of mothers with chil-

dren under age five now work outside of the home, along with more than 50 percent of mothers with children under one year. And with woman-headed households making up nearly 20 percent of families with children under 18, Lenhoff says parental leave has become a necessity for most American families.

The U.S. government has been slow to recognize this need. And, in terms of legislated parental or maternity leave, the U.S. has fallen far behind the rest of the industrialized world. From Japan, which

mandates 12 weeks of parental leave at 60 percent of normal pay, to West Germany, which requires 14 to 26 weeks at 100 percent pay, most industrialized nations have some type of paid parental leaves. And more than 120 countries around the world have some form of parental or maternity leave.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which supports the bill,

says that childcare is not the only issue. Changes in family structure make care for elderly parents an almost impossible situation for adult working children. The association estimates that more than 5 million people provide care for their elderly relatives at any given time, and the principal caregivers are adult daughters.

In testimony last year before the House Committee on Education and Labor, AARP President John Denning said that the principal caregiver for any family member—children, grandchildren, spouses and parents—is usually a woman in her 50s or 60s. "The lack of job protection for workers who must care for a family member is a financial hardship for many families needing two incomes," he said. "This problem is compounded by the fact that mid-life women face both sex and age discrimination when looking for a new job."

**Playing with numbers:** In opposing the bill, Chamber of Commerce officials claim that their primary argument is philosophical—by mandating benefits, the federal government is impinging on the rights of business owners. Krebs adds that family leave has always been, and should remain, a negotiable benefit. He disparages the view that FMLA is just the most recent in a series of government regulations, saying that unlike the child labor laws and the minimum wage, FMLA benefits a par-

Continued on page 22





## cop- ing with the day-care crunch

HE FAMILY HAS UNDERGONE A REVOLUTION that American society has yet to acknowledge. Couples used to have a simple solution to childcare—the wife. In 1960 more than 80 percent of all married women with children under 6 were out of the work force.

But by 1986, propelled by falling wages and changing expectations, 54 percent of women in that category were workers. And the number of single mothers raising children alone had risen dramatically, nearly doubling in the '70s alone.

Presently an estimated 9 million children in the U.S. need day care—a figure that is projected to rise by 3 million in the next three years. Yet the federal government has done little to help parents cope with the changing rules of raising children.

In President Reagan's first budget, he cut the chief federal childcare support program by 20 percent. His budgetary ax, which slashed all social programs, may have been sharpened by the traditional right-wing prejudice that a good mother takes care of her own kids.

Hit hardest by the day-care crunch of recent years are the poor, who cannot afford the estimated \$3,000-plus annual cost per child for pre-school care. (The cost varies widely depending on region, age of children and type of care.) A 1987 study by the Population Reference Bureau, a

non-profit resource center, found that "the lack of affordable childcare is probably preventing many poorly educated and low-income mothers from working at all, when they are the women who need jobs the most." The bureau found that blacks, along with the less educated and unwed mothers had been largely left behind by the entry of women into the workplace.

But even well-off parents suffer from a lack of day care that they can trust. Only one child in seven is in a licensed facility, and even licensing standards vary widely.

Unless you live in one of the few states that has prospered in the Reagan economy—mostly states that have benefitted from the high-tech military buildup, such as Massachusetts or California—your day-care support is probably minimal. Most states are spending less now than they were in 1980 on childcare, due to reductions in federal aid in the early '80s.

In Idaho, for example, one lone adult is allowed to look after 12 infants.

A key reason for day care's uneven quality is the low value American society places on taking care of children. Seventy percent of all day-care workers make less than minimum wage, according to a study by the Center for Public Advocacy Research. This makes it difficult to attract qualified caregivers and leads to burnout

in those who do apply.

"The only occupation with a higher turnover rate than childcare worker is gas station attendant," says Amy Wilkins of the Children's Defense Fund, a Washington advocacy group.

**Local solutions:** The U.S. is unique among major industrialized countries in not having a national childcare policy. A few states and communities have tried to fill the void, especially Massachusetts, which is often cited as a model.

The state's Day Care Partnership Initia-

tive, pushed by governor and presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, established a loan fund to help employers sponsor day-care efforts. A matching program funded by New England Telephone gives grants to non-profit day-care centers.

The initiative also established "childcare resource and referral centers" to help parents find day care and to improve childcare quality. Other Mas-

sachusetts programs subsidize day-care tuition for low-income families and encourage the increase of day-care workers' salaries, which in Massachusetts have risen 40 percent.

Cities, as well as states, have initiated innovative programs. An ordinance in San Francisco requires developers to include day-care facilities in new office buildings or pay a \$1 per square-foot surcharge to a childcare fund.

But unless you live in one of the few states that has prospered in the Reagan economy—mostly states that have benefitted from the high-tech military buildup, such as Massachusetts and California—your day-care support is probably minimal. Most states are spending less now than they were in 1980 on childcare, unable to make up for reductions in federal aid in the early '80s.

Business is sometimes looked to as a day-care savior. Businesses can reap economic benefits from providing on-site childcare, since parents who work must stay home an average of eight days a year because of childcare problems.

Yet only about 2,500 employers in the U.S.—about 2 percent—sponsor day-care centers for employees. The number is growing, but even when businesses do provide help, it's usually as a fringe benefit for skilled, well-paid employees—the ones who need help the least. "Businesses are not coming forward to deal with employees they see as disposable or replaceable," says the Child Defense Fund's Wilkins.

**Easy as ABC:** There are, however, signs that the federal government may begin taking a leading role in childcare. One promising step is the Act for Better Childcare, known as the "ABC bill," which is now pending in Congress. The bill was drafted by the Alliance for Better Childcare, an ad hoc coalition of more than 100 groups ranging from the American Academy of Pediatrics to the United Steelworkers.

The year-long drafting process, according to Alliance members, examined the best childcare programs and tried to incorporate their key features into a national policy. The ABC program earmarks three-fourths of its funding to the states for direct subsidies to low- and moderate-income parents, defined as those making 115 percent or less of the median income. (The cutoff, which would vary by state, would be roughly \$28,000.)

The rest of the money—which is to be matched by state funding—would go for improving state day-care standards, increasing availability, providing training for workers and raising their salaries.

The program's projected cost is \$2.5 billion a year. (The ABC bill would mandate the program to continue at least until 1993.) But given the current anti-welfare-spending atmosphere in Congress, which is a deliberate product of the Reagan tax cuts, this bill likely faces an uphill battle. Yet it has already attracted 34 co-sponsors in the Senate and 144 in the House. One senator signing on is Ernest Hollings (D-SC) of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings fame, which may indicate that ABC can overcome deficit hysteria.

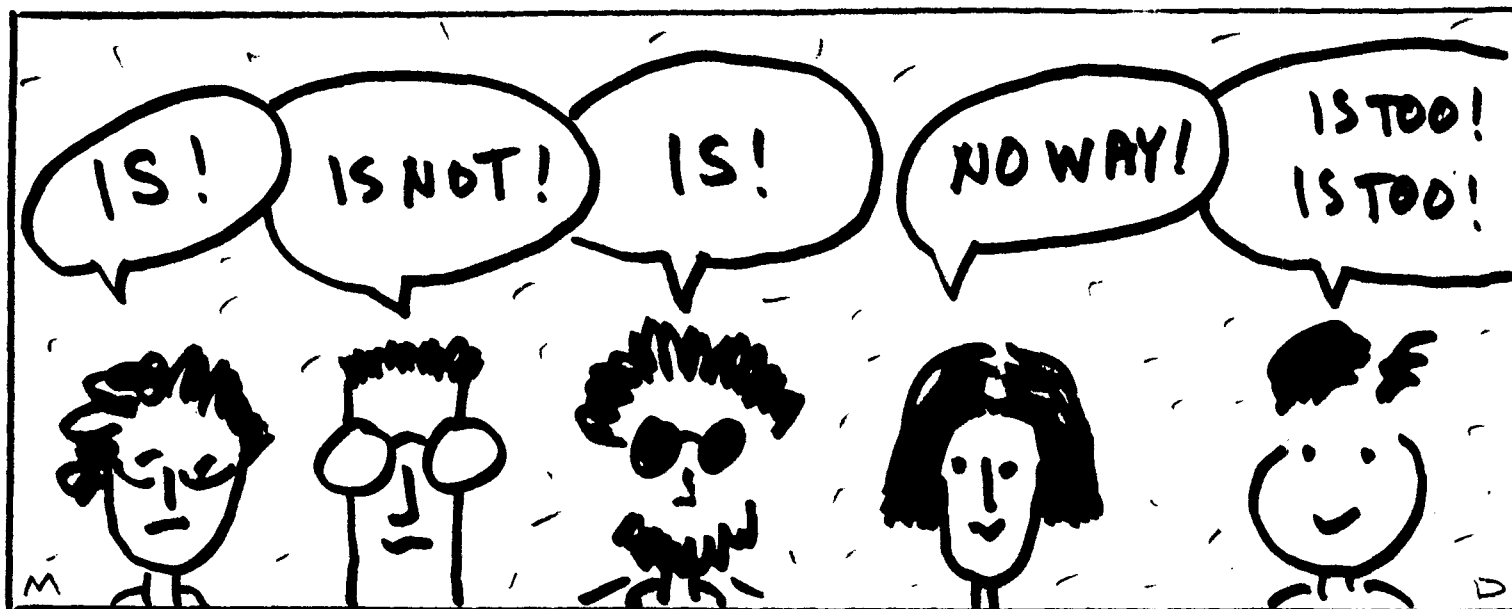
Most ABC co-sponsors are Democrats, but there are some surprising exceptions, such as the very conservative Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL). The bill also faces competition, in the form of a bill introduced by

*Continued on page 22*

IN THESE TIMES JAN. 27-FEB. 2, 1988 13



# EDITORIAL



## The debate on DSA and Nicaraguan democracy

The three-week-long debate in these pages about the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), reflects the frustration on the left at not having a coherent political movement that can operate effectively on the American political scene. There are many reasons for such a feeling, and for the left's irrelevance, not the least of which is the legacy of the '30s and the '60s. Today's left is still permeated with the concept of politics inherited from the movements of those times. It is a concept in many ways more religious—at least in the traditional sense—than political.

Those in both the Old Left of the '30s and New Left of the '60s had a strong need to be correct, to have the right line on any issue or situation, to make sure that even if only a relative handful of people shared their views, those with whom they associated or identified did so fully. If they couldn't win popular support, exercise power or have a direct influence on public policy at least they had the solace of moral rectitude—and a community to help shield them from a hostile world.

This approach to politics has survived in today's left. It can be seen especially in the debate over two issues: Nicaragua and the Jesse Jackson campaign. Both issues deserve extended comment.

First Nicaragua. There are really two issues here, whether or not—or in what sense—Nicaragua is democratic, and whether that is a question a political organization needs to, or should, decide.

Democracy is, of course, a historically relative term. Most people would agree that the United States not only is democratic, but that it always has been. And, indeed, compared to most other nations this has been true throughout our history.

But it is not true if one uses today's standards to measure the state of democracy in the United States either before slavery was abolished in 1862, or before women were accorded the vote in 1920. Looked at in today's light, the United States of those days might look more like South Africa.

In short, the meaning of U.S. democracy has changed greatly over the past 200 years. It still is changing—and most of us would agree that it has a long way to go.

Similarly, it seems to us, the only way to look at democracy in Nicaragua is within its historical and regional context. In that light, Nicaragua looks pretty good. While there are certainly serious restrictions on freedom of speech and dissident political activity, these are minor compared to the brutal suppression of dissident movements in El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras. Only last week, in the first case brought against a government before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, Honduras was accused of maintaining army death squads that have caused the "disappearance" of suspected civilian leftists. It has been an open secret since 1980 that CIA-trained soldiers operated Honduran death squads, and that dissidents have systematically been hunted down and murdered with government complicity.

But Honduras is child's play compared to El Salvador and Guatemala. These countries have massacred peasants who supported revolutionary movements and made a policy of trying to decapitate opposition movements by slaughtering their leaders. Compare, for example, the fate of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was shot to death by an army death squad during a church service, to that of Nicaragua's dissident church leader Cardinal

Miguel Obando y Bravo, who the Sandinistas chose to head Nicaragua's National Reconciliation Commission. The Sandinista regime certainly restricts the activities of its opponents, but there is not a single verified case of government-inspired killing of dissenters. In fact, that's why Nicaragua has so many more political prisoners than its neighbors. Its dissidents are alive and in jail. The other countries' are dead. Yet, because the Reagan administration and media constantly refer to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras as democratic, critics of Nicaragua's undemocratic behavior rarely, if ever, examine the real differences.

There is, of course, another major difference between Nicaraguan democracy and the democracy of its neighbors. The Sandinista government accepts the Second Vatican Council's option for the poor. The Nicaraguan revolution supports and is supported by the vast majority of peasants. Its opponents are largely from the former upper class, whose privileges and living standard have been eroded by the revolution. On the other hand, in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras the opposite is true. These governments support and are supported by the large landowners, merchants and professionals, as well as the military high commands. Their opponents are the rural poor, urban workers and dissident intellectuals.

The meaning of democracy to these two groups of classes is quite different. Democracy as we know it is a democracy of the educated, the well-fed, those who are accustomed to a high degree of personal freedom and mobility. In the U.S. such people make up the majority, but in Central America they make up a small minority. Most of us, even on the left, have more in common with them than with the peasants. So it should be no surprise that many of us identify with the problems of the opposition in Nicaragua. Nor should it surprise us that for most Central Americans, the meaning of democracy is different from ours.

We think it is important that these ideas about democracy be discussed within the left. It is admirable that members of DSA want to explore them. But that is far different from attempting to have the organization adopt a line on whether Nicaragua is or is not democratic. There are two strong reasons to avoid such a debate in a political organization that believes its task is to help empower a left majority in the United States. First, even within the organization it will prove impossible to reach full agreement on whether or what kind of democracy exists in Nicaragua—or anywhere else. So adopting a position can only alienate those who disagree. More important, this issue is not one of general principle, but of opinion—and those upholding the banner of Nicaragua's democracy are in a small minority. The purpose of a political organization is to influence policy. It is to seek the widest areas of agreement on principles consistent with its own. In the case of Nicaragua this means agreement that it is Nicaragua's business what kind of government it wants, that even if the government is disliked by most Americans, we have no right to impose our ideas of what's good for Nicaragua.

That's a position entirely consistent with American principles of democracy. After all, our own revolution began in opposition to foreign rule, and few Americans believe we have a right to impose our will on others. In fact, this idea is so deeply and widely held that even House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) and Majority Whip Tony Coelho (D-CA) have taken to mouthing it lately. That principle, which socialists share with most Americans, would serve well as a cornerstone of a democratic foreign policy. Within it, there is room for many opinions about the degree of democracy that Nicaragua, or any other country, enjoys.

NEXT WEEK: JESSE JACKSON AND THE LEFT.

## IN THESE TIMES

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Writers

GOVERNMENT



# LETTERS

## Not bolting

SINCE *IN THESE TIMES* HAS CARRIED TWO MIS-  
leading accounts of my response to the  
question of whether DSA should endorse  
Jesse Jackson—one (of course) by Alexan-  
der Cockburn (*ITT*, Dec. 23, 1987) who  
wrote that I "let it be known that if DSA said  
anything good about the reverend [I] would  
bolt" and the other in a letter by George  
Dolph (*ITT*, Jan. 13)—I would like to say  
the following:

I was indeed opposed to a DSA endorse-  
ment of Jackson, first because I come from  
Hymietown and second because in all the  
years of DSA's existence I have opposed  
any such political endorsement as being  
divisive, ritualistic and without significant  
practical consequences.

But I did not "let it be known" that if DSA  
endorsed Jackson I would "bolt." In fact,  
DSA did endorse Jackson and I have re-  
mained a vice-chair of the group despite  
my disagreement on this issue.

Irving Howe  
New York

## DSA, Jackson, Nicaragua

AS A LAPPED EX-MEMBER OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
Socialists of America (DSA) who left due  
to a feeling of the basic irrelevance of the  
organization, I must nonetheless take sharp  
issue with John Judis' criticisms on the  
group's recent convention (*ITT*, Jan. 13).

First, on Nicaragua, while it might be  
stretching a point to say that the country  
enjoys "a high level of democracy," I fail to  
see what purpose would be served by aping  
the "mainstream" in ruling such debate  
beyond the pale. Such a posture renders  
impotent the policy of "simply opposing in-  
tervention" because it surrenders the moral  
high ground to Reagan and friends. If  
Reagan is right—and liberal Democrats  
never, ever, contradict him on the funda-  
mental nature of the Nicaraguan govern-  
ment, because they are afraid to say any-  
thing positive about Nicaragua—then why  
oppose intervention and leave to Reagan  
the image of resolute fighter while reserving  
for themselves that of the vacillating wimps?

And what fruits has that strategy borne  
over the past seven years that we should  
continue in it? Can we stand any more of  
these one-vote defeats on contra aid—  
which tell us as plain as day the strategy  
of the "mainstream Democrats"—and allow  
as many as possible to vote "no" to appease  
public opinion, while at the same time mak-  
ing sure that contra aid does not fail,  
thereby endangering corporate campaign  
contributions? If that one vote should de-  
viate from the plan, another can always be  
made to switch. At the risk of losing my  
membership in the "mainstream" I would  
say that participation in such schemes  
ought to make one a wee bit humble about  
berating others' lack of democracy.

Then we have the matter of Jesse  
Jackson. While I can and have criticized  
Jackson until the cows come home, can  
Judis be serious in recommending the "pol-  
icy of no policy" that won DSA such plaudits  
all across society in 1984? The Rainbow  
Coalition "has shown no potential of draw-  
ing together black and white ethnic Demo-  
crats"? Who the hell has? Judis' former  
dream ticket of Hart and Nunn? Babbitt?  
Mondale? Jackson has at least made the

effort—more convincingly in 1988 than in  
1984 perhaps—and he ought to be given  
credit for it.

And please, spare me the handwringing  
about Jackson weakening Chicago's refor-  
mers in the City Council after the death of  
Mayor Harold Washington. Anyone who was  
in Chicago knows what really happened:  
Mayoral succession in Chicago is by law  
left neither to new popular elections nor to  
a constitutionally designated legal succe-  
sor. It is thrown instead into the lap of the  
Chicago City Council; at the time of  
Washington's death a coalition of the entire  
bloc of white machine aldermen coalesced  
with black aldermen also interested in a  
return of patronage, to select Eugene  
Sawyer mayor. The reformers were  
weakened indeed.

But the intervention of Jackson elec-  
trified the community, provoking a mass  
demonstration in opposition. Although it  
looked for a time as though Sawyer might  
decline the office in view of the massive  
black opposition, ultimately he did not. But  
let's not blame Jackson for that. His in-  
tervention in this case nearly saved the day  
for the Washington movement. And it has  
forced Sawyer to hew more closely to  
Washington's program than he would have  
liked. Without Jackson's intervention, the  
election of Sawyer was simply a "done deal."  
Although his supporters could try to blame  
their votes on Jackson's "interference," we  
ought to be smart enough to see through  
that one.

I can almost agree with Judis when he  
says that "an organization like DSA that  
labels itself 'socialist' and professes to  
create a 'socialist America' cannot affect  
mainstream politics." But why then is he so  
eager for them to attempt the impossible,  
and in the process water down whatever  
their reason for existence was in the first  
place? If one's only goal in life is  
"mainstreaming" one's self, then why give  
DSA even a moment's thought?

The dilemmas and disappointments de-  
scribed by Judis are real. And his comments  
often provoke useful thought. But his con-  
stant whine grates our ears. Yes, by all means,  
let's discuss rebuilding the American econ-  
omy. This need not mean accepting the  
anti-labor pabulum passed out on this sub-  
ject by the Harts and Babbitts either. By all  
means, let's debate the nature of socialism,  
something that is going on throughout the  
socialist world even now. Yes, DSA could  
play a more constructive role than it has  
in all this. But let's stop blaming the state  
of the world on this organization. DSA  
seems to exhibit much less desperation  
than the manic, ever-changing reasons for

despair that Judis so frantically throws our  
way every week in *In These Times*.

Steven Cohen  
Chicago

## DSA, et al.

I THINK *IN THESE TIMES* IS AN EXCELLENT PUBLICA-  
tion but I can do without John B. Judis.  
As regards his half-baked attack on DSA  
(*ITT*, Jan. 13) permit me to respond:

Nicaragua does enjoy a high level of  
economic democracy. The achievements of  
the Sandinista revolution in eliminating il-  
literacy, redistributing land, assuring much  
higher human standards in medical care,  
sanitation and public health far beyond the  
norm in Central America are extensively  
documented.

Nicaragua is under merciless attack by a  
terrorist proxy army of the greatest military  
power in world history. Considering those  
circumstances, it is amazing that there is  
as much freedom as presently exists in the  
country. Would the U.S. allow a newspaper  
supporting the overthrow of the government  
in wartime and supported by the government  
trying to overthrow it to exist? Of course  
not—our own past history confirms that.

Which one of the other Democratic can-  
didates besides Jesse Jackson has a good  
record as an "administrator"? Certainly not  
Albert Gore, Paul Simon, Gary Hart and  
Richard Gephardt. The records of Mario  
Cuomo, Michael Dukakis and Bruce Babbitt  
are questionable, to say the least.

Many of us here in the Bay Area are not  
particularly impressed with *Tikkun*  
magazine or Michael Lerner. The policy  
seems to be standard pseudo-left Zionist  
apologetics. The issue on Jackson was a bit  
of a hatchet job motivated by Jackson's  
strong stand for Palestinian rights. How  
many times does Jackson have to apologize  
publicly for his two private anti-Semitic re-  
marks? Apparently private anti-Semitism  
was not considered a disqualifier for  
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Robert Kennedy,  
Harry Truman and Richard M. Nixon, among  
others. What kind of double standard is  
operative here?

If the Rainbow Coalition is "less than per-  
fect," as Judis correctly observes, it still is  
a more appropriate vehicle for left politics  
than the Democratic Leadership Confer-  
ence (DLC) or any other so-called  
"mainstream" Democratic group.

Since Jackson is the most progressive  
candidate, why shouldn't DSA endorse him?

What is "market socialism"? Yugoslavia?  
A total economic failure by all accounts.

The Western European "socialist" parties  
abandoned the "substance" of socialism  
after World War I. This is not a recent de-

velopment as Judis falsely indicates.

Many of us feel that the reformist liberal  
tradition is morally and intellectually bank-  
rupt. We have no interest in Judis' tepid  
palliatives of "business incubators, re-  
search parks, quality-control groups and  
welfare employment training." That sounds  
like the old DLC neo-conservative pabulum.

If Judis were of the left, he would be  
recommending *Left Business Observer* in-  
stead of the banal *Inc.* Please, Judis, go write  
for *The New Republic*. You would be much  
more comfortable there and many of us  
would be happy to have you out of our lives.

Michael Hardesty  
Emeryville, Cal.

## Flying teacups

JOHN B. JUDIS COMPARES THOSE WHO  
attribute a "high level of democracy" to  
Nicaragua to U.S. Communists and Berkeley  
Maoists, and by inference compares the ac-  
tions of the Sandinista leadership to those  
of Stalin and the Chinese Cultural Revolu-  
tion. He further compares the idea of the  
presence of democracy in Nicaragua to the  
ideas of stones talking and teacups flying.  
Democracy in Nicaragua is fantasy? This  
line of arguments sounds more like Reagan  
paranoia than liberal fantasy.

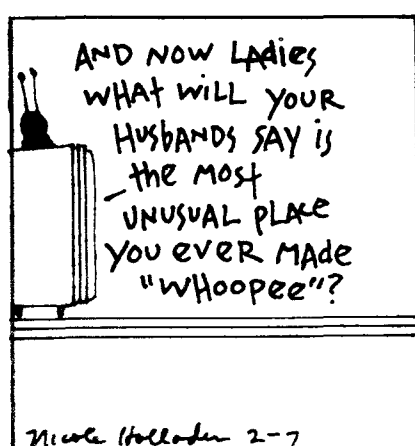
Speaking of fantasy, William Gasperini  
(*ITT*, Jan. 13) seems to accept the statement  
of opponents of the Sandinistas that "U.S.  
hostility will never cease, unless [Nica-  
ragua] 'democratizes.'" Surely Judis, Gaspe-  
rini, and anyone else who is familiar with  
the history of Nicaragua over the past cen-  
tury and Ronald Reagan over the past seven  
years, will recognize the "fantasy" embodied  
in that statement. U.S. hostility will never  
cease until the Nicaraguan government rolls  
over and hollers "uncle," as Reagan bluntly  
stated, and submits to economic and military  
dominance by the U.S. empire. Whether or  
not the government is a democracy or a dic-  
tatorship is beside the point.

The present Nicaraguan government was  
democratically elected to office, they have  
democratically written a new constitution,  
and hold ongoing meetings of a democrati-  
cally elected legislature. All this despite  
continuous political, economic and military  
attacks by the most powerful nation on  
earth. I did not come by this information  
by talking to stones, but by reading articles  
published by Christian church groups who  
have been working in Nicaragua before,  
during and after the revolution.

Judis should at least give us an outline  
of what he considers "a high level of democ-  
racy." After that we can start our debate on  
whether teacups can fly.

Ray Ingram  
Baton Rouge, La.

## SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



By James F. Petras and  
Morris Morley

## Chile's Pinochet plans to perpetuate his rule

**B**ETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1988 and MARCH 1989, Chilean voters will confront a yes or no ballot offering a single presidential candidate to be selected by the military junta. Augusto Pinochet, head of the junta that has ruled Chile since the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende's socialist government, is determined to be that candidate. The army is backing him, but polls consistently show that less than 25 percent of the potential electorate would vote for him, and three junta members have declared that the next president should be a civilian.

Pinochet and the army, however, are determined to ensure the continuation of military rule into the 21st century.

Their strategy is spelled out in detail in a series of secret documents prepared by the Interior Ministry that was presented to a closed meeting of more than 300 government-appointed mayors on August 10-12, in the resort city of Vina del Mar. It directs appointed provincial governors and mayors to work to neutralize Pinochet's political opposition and to employ all of their resources to keep the military in power well after 1989.

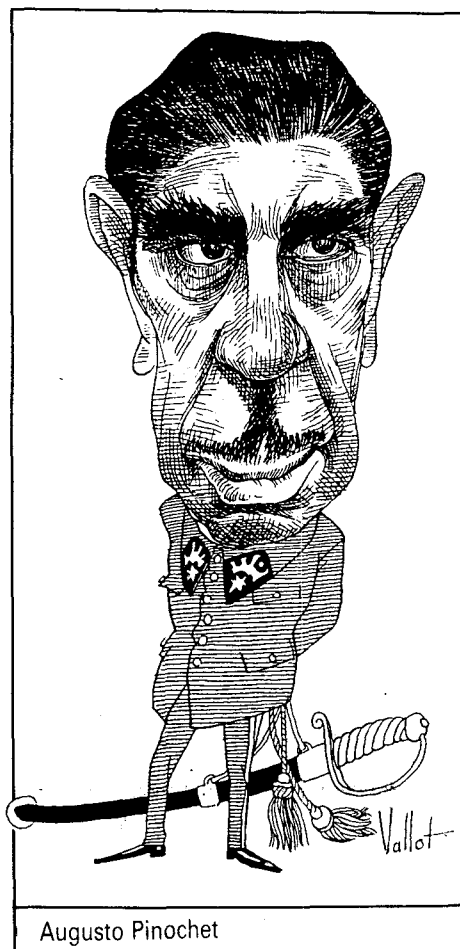
The documents identify the stages of military rule. During the first—1973 to 1982—the political and economic system was "sanitized." The second, from 1982 to 1990, will make the transition from the "sanitized state" to an "authentic democracy." The third stage, beginning in 1990

and having no terminating date, is characterized as the period of the consolidation of new political institutions. Responsibility for the post-1990 functioning of the political system and its institutions "corresponds to those who originated the process and were its principal actors, the Armed Forces."

Since opposition is inevitable, the documents provide a "National Civic Action Plan." A vertical network of grass-roots organizations, linked through appointed mayors in towns throughout Chile to the central administration, will sustain Pinochet's rule. It will rely on political-economic computer profiles of each municipality, a substantial infusion of government funds into "local leadership training," and the long reach of the regime to "neutralize" opponents.

The role of the mayors will be pivotal. The plan tasks them with "carefully selecting" local community leaders who will be assigned "to penetrate all sectors of civil society." The mayors are to establish a grass-roots informer network that will collect information on the opposition's means of communication and individuals that finance its activities. This is to be accompanied by "public denunciations...of what-

ever opposition action is contrary to the interests and program of the municipality." The net is wide enough to reach any critic, and the powers of the mayors are broad enough to undermine any campaign organized to defeat Pinochet's political ambi-



Augusto Pinochet

tions. The title of this section of the plan is "The Opposition's Credibility Must Be Neutralized." The plan emphasizes the importance of identifying all opposition elements, putting them under "permanent surveillance," and making sure "their actions are analyzed and neutralized in an adequate manner." So much for the Chilean democracy.

### A series of secret meetings with 300 government- appointed mayors plotted to neutralize opposition.

The plan distinguishes between three types of opposition: "anti-system" groups that want to overthrow the government and the state; relatively moderate opposition that wants only to replace the government, but accept the existing state institutions as legitimate; and the partisans of the government. Toward the first group, the plan calls for "intransigent struggle"; toward the second, tolerance but continuing surveillance; and toward the third, the mayors are instructed to be "neutral." In drawing this distinction between those who wish to reform the authoritarian political system but retain many of the socioeconomic structures, and those who seek to challenge both the regime and the state, and gauging its repressive policies accordingly, Pinochet and his

advisers will be able to drive a wedge between the center and the left at the expense of both.

**Seizing the initiative:** The scope and breadth of Pinochet's "National Civic Action Plan" entail several changes in Chilean politics. First, Pinochet is organizing to compete with the opposition at the grass roots. Second, he has constructed a formidable political apparatus at the municipal level, backed by the purse of the national government and the coercive power of the state. Third, he has seized the political initiative from his adversaries and shifted the ground of political competition from electoral to socioeconomic issues.

Meanwhile, his opposition focuses only on the electoral ambitions behind Pinochet's proposals for municipal reforms and fails to grasp the institutional goals that are of more central importance to Chile's future development. Finally, Pinochet has tied his electoral fortunes to the institutional and class changes that resulted from the overthrow of the Allende government—thus creating strong pressures for a positive response from all those who feel themselves part of the "new order," regardless of how much or how little they have benefited from it. It is widely accepted that this group constitutes a substantial number of the 1 to 2 million registered voters. Together with the formidable power of the state at his beck and call, and the highly politicized quasi-totalitarian "mass organizing" at the community level that he has undertaken, Pinochet shapes up as a difficult candidate to stop.

And who, after all, could stop him? Chile's six major political parties have been plagued by policy differences, personality conflicts, and lack of funds, all of which Pinochet has cleverly exploited. In late August, the opposition parties finally agreed to set aside their differences (with the exception of the Communist Party) and pool resources in an effort to mobilize a voter registration drive to block Pinochet's presidential candidacy. Their target is the more than 6 million voters still unregistered since the 1973 coup. But the registration drive has been lethargic. It has been hampered by a lack of funds, the regime's monopoly of national television, and the actual cost of getting back on the electoral rolls, which the government has made very expensive for the almost 4 million Chileans who live in extreme poverty.

The campaign to defeat Pinochet's effort to become a fixture will not be won, however, if the opposition continues to focus only on electoral politics or on seducing dissident generals, or if it sustains illusions about Washington as an ally of Chilean democracy. Pinochet has thrown the gauntlet, challenging the opposition over the loyalty of the population at the grass-roots level where the issues are jobs, housing, food, education, health and welfare. The question is whether the opposition can begin the gritty task of linking these everyday issues with the struggle for free elections. Otherwise, it is in deep trouble. ■

**James Petras** is a professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Binghamton. **Morris Morley** is a lecturer in politics at Macquarie University and a senior research fellow with the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington, D.C.

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By George E. Hopkins

## Learning wrong history lessons is worse than total Namnesia

**T**HE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER, GEORGE Santayana, wrote that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. But we are far more likely to remember the past erroneously than to forget it altogether. And if, as Martin Heidegger asserts, there is an intimate connection between historical memory—the naming of things—and the process we call thinking, muddled thinking can be a direct result of muddled history.

Each generation seeks a "useable past" that combines society's collective experience into a set of shared "lessons" providing guidance for the future. Wars have been central in shaping the historical lessons that underlie public support for broad policy in 20th century America. Once a consensus emerges as to the proper "lesson" each war has taught, national leaders are almost obliged to formulate policy to sustain that prevailing "lesson." So the interpretation of history is a high-stakes game.

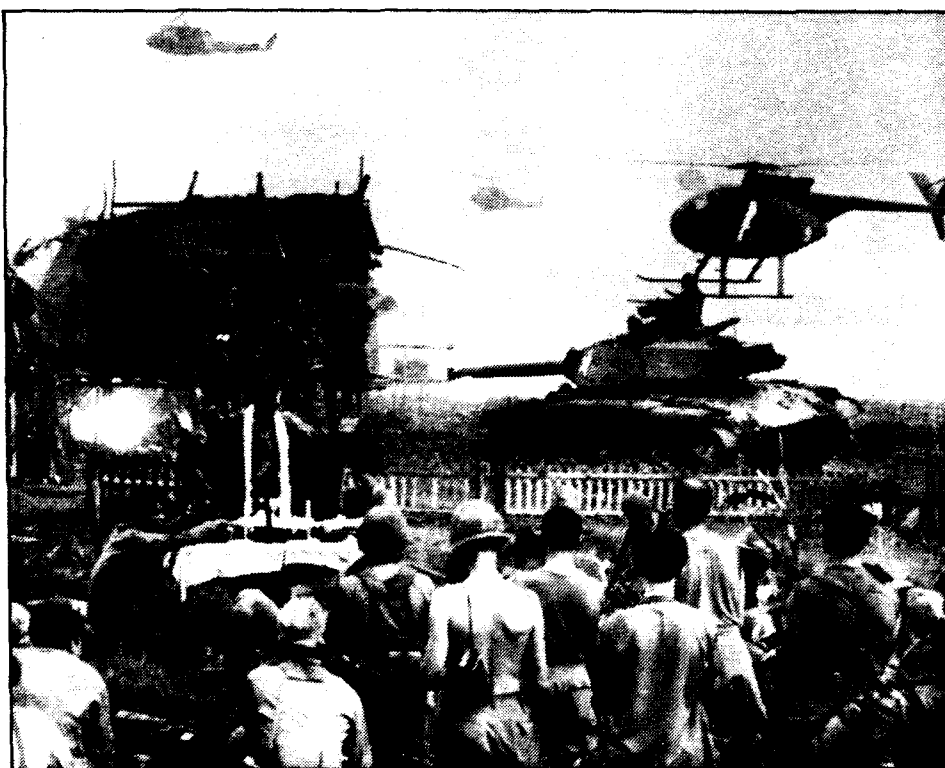
The U.S. is now in the process of sorting out the "lessons" of Vietnam. If this sorting out goes badly, if we name things wrong, we might well be worse off than if we were to forget our past entirely. Indeed, the popular initial reaction to Vietnam has been a kind of collective amnesia, almost as if Americans have been aware, at some visceral level, that rushing to judgment on Vietnam might saddle the next generation with error.

**Rambo and remembrance:** On the face of it, prospects that the proper lessons of Vietnam will emerge are not good. But the process by which lessons emerge is complex, and historians play only a secondary role. Ever since Homer, it has been the artists, poets and pundits who teach our lessons. Social critic Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* suggests that popular entertainments provide a powerful molding force. After the Civil War, Wilson saw the trashy fiction of the gilded age depicting Yankee boy winning the heart of a rebel belle (or vice versa), as the core of the romantic aura that still dominates collective memory of the ghastly bloodletting of 1861–65. Will the puerile screen posturings of Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* do for the Vietnam War what the smarmy popular literature of the post-bellum period did for the Civil War?

In the contemporary ideological struggle over who's going to teach the "lessons" of Vietnam, *Rambo* movies generally fall into the conservative camp, but with a lot of straddling. The primary message is betrayal—and the core of the conservative effort to revise and mold the history of Vietnam hangs on this peg, broadly reminiscent of the Nazi effort to depict German defeat in World War I as the result of a "stab in the back" by Jews, leftists, malingerers and other home-front defeatists.

But Hollywood has given us both sides of Vietnam. Louis B. Mayer once said: "If you want to send a message, use Western Union." That may be so when dealing with overt political themes. But a cultural consensus is not a political theme, at least not overtly.

John Wayne, unabashed hawk on Vietnam that he was, had no luck trying to politicize his views on the war through cinema, as the commercial (and critical) failure of his 1967 film *The Green Berets* attests. Wayne, like Stallone a noted civilian



*Apocalypse Now:* Will its "lesson"—that Vietnam was insanity—be remembered?

non-server, may have inspired impressionable youth in the '50s to emulate his cinematic exploits, but he couldn't convince the '60s generation that Vietnam was fun like World War II.

But once America's active participation in the war ended, a series of frankly anti-war films did prove successful. *Coming Home*, *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter* all told us that Vietnam was insane. That's hardly a lesson unique to Vietnam. Stanley Kubrick said it better and funnier in the prewar film *Dr. Strangelove*.

The polar opposites of these films, the cartoon-like works of Stallone and Chuck Norris, tell us that war is tough but glamorous. Like Wayne's Green Beret film, *Rambo* and Norris' *Missing in Action* are formulaistic action films that rely on star power to attract an audience. But these movies offer nothing to differentiate them substantially from the pro-war action films of earlier times.

**The human chalkboard:** How "factual" have the lessons of earlier 20th century wars been, and how successful have U.S. policy-makers been in applying those lessons?

World War I taught a lesson that was perhaps learned too well. Disillusioned by the sour aftermath of the war that was supposed to make the world safe for democracy, Americans drew the lesson that our values were safe only so long as we kept them at home. The "isolationism" of the '20s, that led to rejection of the League of Nations, and the neutrality acts of the '30s summarized this lesson. We would not join others to stop Hitler or the Japanese because to do so would have violated the lesson learned in World War I. In 1932, a Gallup poll revealed that a solid 80 percent of Americans thought participation in World War I had been a mistake.

World War II taught a different set of lessons, and forced us to unlearn, or revise, the lessons of World War I. The nation earned a "second chance" in World War II to re-examine its past, and this time get it right. Never again would we stand by while

Mussolini invaded Ethiopia or Hitler bullied Czechoslovakia. The way to make the world safe for America and democracy was to participate actively in the world, ever vigilant for signs of aggression. We must never again, we thought, appease a bad guy as the French and British had appeased Hitler at Munich.

The "Munich analogy" became the operative lesson of World War II. By resolutely binding ourselves to allies we would deter future wars, and if push came to shove, we could prevent a big war by fighting a little one. Far better to have stopped Hitler on the road to Prague, early on, than to have had to root him out later from Festung Europa.

The Munich analogy was a lesson the U.S. refused to forget. Ho Chi Minh became Hitler. South Vietnam became Czechoslovakia, and in LBJ's view Ngo Dinh Diem became "the Churchill of Asia." Either we stopped them at the DMZ or we would have to stop them in San Francisco. We learned the lessons of World War II so well and applied them so thoroughly in Vietnam, that we forgot there was an intervening war with a quite different lesson: Korea.

The costs of that war included 54,000 American lives, 100,000 seriously wounded, and an approval rating for President Harry Truman that fell as low as 23 percent in the Gallup Poll. In 1953, his party lost the presidency and both houses of Congress in a 6.6 million-vote landslide. Why did President Johnson not learn this lesson of history? Why did he apply so thoroughly the lessons of World War II and ignore so completely the more obvious lesson of Korea?

We should have learned from Korea that the U.S. people have no stomach for prolonged, inconclusive, limited wars fought in the name of abstractions like communist containment—particularly if that war is on the Asian mainland.

**Historians and hard-liners:** Ideally, historians not artists should provide the core of "reality" in the molding of a consensus on the "lessons" each war has taught.

Skeptics insist that written histories have amounted to little more than the "victors' propaganda," and that might be true. In the case of Vietnam, historians have been, on balance, critical of U.S. participation and performance. They have necessarily had to provide the leavening to stabilize and counteract the myth-making of the media, and the profession has generally served the cause of truth. The war was a defeat, a survey of the current literature on the war leaves no alternative to this interpretation—it is, in sum, "factual."

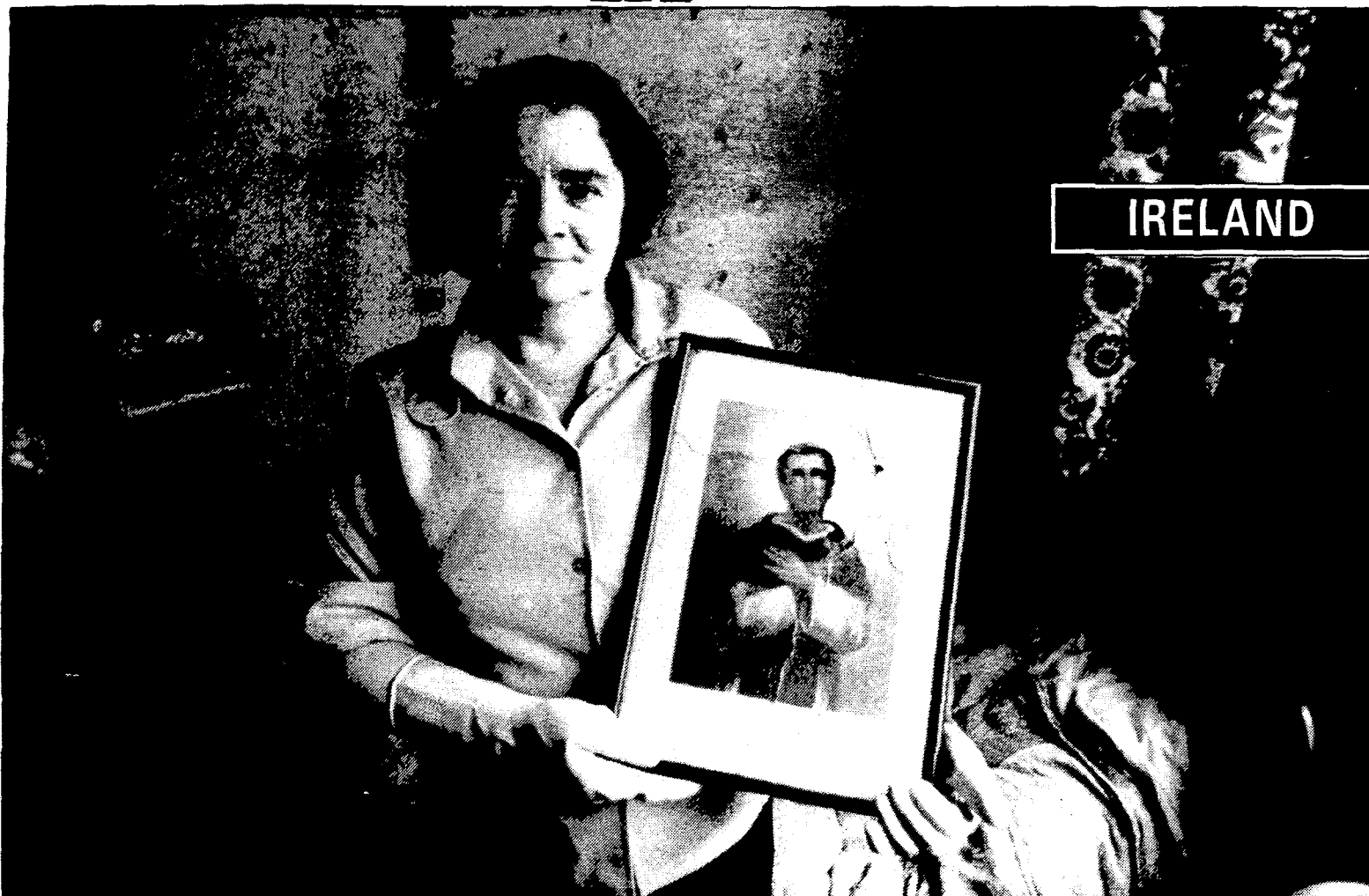
But before consensus can emerge, a faction must either be mollified or put to rout. Professional historians have, so far, had little success in putting to rout those who defend the Vietnam War, or who criticize our participation in it only because it was a "no-win" war. The reason for this failure to stifle the opposing faction of "revisionists," is that no significant "revisionism" exists within scholarly circles. The opposing faction, in the case of Vietnam, lies outside the boundaries of academic disputation. Retired generals, Charlton Heston, Ronald Reagan, Accuracy in Media—all those who seek to depict the Vietnam War as a "noble cause"—do not deal in scholarly research. Hence, like the Vietnam era itself, which profoundly unsettled our society, the argument about the meaning of the war is taking place outside the academy, in the arena of politics, art and in the crucible of the court system.

**Searching for answers:** America's longest war, which sent 60,000 people, mostly teen-agers, to their deaths over a 10-year period must have taught us a lesson. But what? Liberals will assert that the lessons of Vietnam are that we cannot be the world's policemen, and that we should not support regimes that lack an indigenous base of support among their own people. Conservatives will argue that Vietnam proves that there is no substitute for victory, and that next time we'd better do it right, by unleashing the military, quashing domestic dissent and muzzling the press. Both liberals and conservatives are busily revising history, challenging each other for the right to teach the "lesson" of Vietnam.

No conflict since the Civil War has rent the national psyche like Vietnam. When it ended with the pathetic helicopter evacuation from the roof of our Saigon embassy in 1975, collective amnesia seemed the best remedy. The lesson we had to draw, but dared not, was that we lost in Vietnam because it was not a just war. Everybody agrees that it was a defeat, liberals and conservatives alike, but nobody yet agrees what it really means.

The only way we can redeem the war in Vietnam is to think our way through it. We should understand that the defeat in Vietnam was not the fault of the U.S. military or the protesters, or some other scapegoat. Col. Harry Summers' book, *On Strategy*, rightly argues that never again should young Americans be sent into battle without public backing and a clear definition of the goals to be achieved. But that begs the question, for clear goals are the result of clear thought, and clear thought requires an accurate memory of the past. The only way to redeem the Vietnam War then is to think our way through why it happened. We cannot redeem it by comic-opera posturing in Grenada, Libya, Nicaragua or El Salvador.





## IRELAND

north are strongly ambivalent about the outlawed organization—sympathetic to its aim of a united Ireland, although doubtful about some of its tactics. Its legal wing, Sinn Féin, continues to get 35 to 42 per cent of the vote in elections, which indicates it is more than just a fringe organization of terrorists. In a ghetto like Clonard, it actually fulfills some of the functions of a local government. The horrible kneecappings—there have been more than a thousand of these shootings deliberately calculated to maim—are not carried out against Protestants or British soldiers, but are actually directed against those suspected of being common criminals.

The IRA views the British—not the local Protestant majority—as the enemy. It insists that its guerrilla campaign will eventually drive out the colonizers, and Irish of whatever religion will be able to join together and confront their common economic crisis. But Conroy's first-hand account makes clear how far apart the two communities have become: "You can tell a man's religion from the cemetery he buries his people in, from the newspaper he reads, from the bus he rides in, from the football team he roots for. In some neighborhoods, you can guess a man's faith quite accurately by noting which side of the street he walks on."

Conroy did not stay only in Catholic areas. He also moved across the barrier into the other part of Belfast, and he includes a powerful description of the big parade on the Twelfth of July, the national (Protestant) holiday. He has genuine sympathy for Protestants and he understands that their fears are certainly strengthened by Ireland's bleak economic scene.

A united Ireland may sound utopian, but there is really no other choice. The British army cannot enforce peace, ever. And as long as the British government continues to guarantee that the partition of 65 years ago can only be altered by a majority vote in the north, then the Protestant power structure has absolutely no incentive to compromise. Under such circumstances, continued stalemate is inevitable.

John Conroy ends his moving and informative book with an understatement. "The violence and brutality of the IRA," he writes, "are easy to portray by reporters who drop in for a quick visit in the wake of some atrocity, but the cruelty of the society that drives men to take up arms is more subtle and requires some time to understand." With compassion and skill, he has taken the time. ■

**James North** is author of *Freedom Rising*. He is currently at work on a book about the Third World debt crisis.

One of *Belfast Diary's* greatest strengths is its calm, persuasive explanation of how successive British governments of both major parties lost and never regained Catholic confidence, which was the biggest single factor in the rebirth of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Basically, the British accepted the existing discriminatory power structure in the north, which influenced them to regard the protesting Catholics as the problem. Britain passed legislation, little known in the U.S., that resulted in mass arrests and detentions without trial. One provision, the exclusion order, means, as Conroy explains, that "the Northerner can be arrested, interrogated, held for seven days, and deported back to his province and he has no right to learn the charges against him and no right of appeal."

With Britain against them, and continually fearful for their safety, what could Conroy's neighbors in Clonard do? Many joined a peaceful campaign to withhold their property taxes or rents to protest the mass arrests and the continuing discrimination. But the local government weakened the strike by giving itself extraordinary garriseeing powers, which it used energetically against people who were already desperately poor. The Social Democratic and Labour Party, a middle-class, moderate organization, has also been praised as an alternative to the IRA. But Conroy reports that the party, however well-intentioned, had no real presence in poor areas like Clonard.

**Omnipresent IRA:** The IRA did come knocking, though. Conroy feels that most Catholics in the

## An emerald island of Third World blues

**Belfast Diary:  
War as a Way of Life**  
By John Conroy  
Beacon Press; 218 pp. \$18.95

By James North

IRELAND WAS THE FIRST REAL Third World country. The "Third World" is not a geographic zone on the globe as much as a political and economic relationship between places; there can be no Third World without a First. The Elizabethan English, followed by Oliver Cromwell, conquered and subjected the original Irish inhabitants, expropriated much of their land, "planted" colonists to oversee them, and turned their economy into an appendage of Britain's. The colonizers justified their acts on the grounds that the Irish were primitive, even subhuman.

It was a pattern that Europe, America and Japan would follow across vast stretches of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Four centuries later, the colonizers left behind an Irish economy so weak and distorted that it cannot provide work for its people, even though the island's population of 5.2 million is several millions lower than it was before the great Potato Famine of the 1840s. Young Irish men and women are still flocking to America, looking for "illegal" work alongside economic refugees from other, more recognizably Third World countries like Colombia or the Philippines.

Today, the most visible legacy of Ireland's long history of pain is the violent conflict in the six counties in the northeastern part of the island that remained under British control after the rest of Ireland fi-

nally won independence in 1921. The latest phase of that conflict, which began in the late '60s, has been reported here as an incomprehensible melange of senseless violence—irrational bombings and shootings provoked by raw, ancient hatreds.

**Ireland's troubles:** Now, finally, we have a powerful, comprehensive, fair, compassionate and above all very human account of the "Troubles." John Conroy, a respected Chicago writer, spent more than a year in Belfast, devoting much of his energy to understanding the working-class Catholic ghetto of Clonard. During his stays there he was stopped by British army patrols, confronted more than once with the business end of a gun, and held hostage twice by Irish Republican Army commando units. He has come away with a book that reveals far more than the 20 years of curt newspaper accounts and fleeting TV images on which most Americans have had to rely.

*Belfast Diary* comes alive due to its likeable personalities, who are mainly poor people forced to live in a shabby area where the unemployment rates are 25 per cent. There are people like Mrs. Bridgit Barbour, Conroy's landlady, a cheerful widow who knows everything going on in the neighborhood and insists on remaining despite the dangers. And there's Jimmy Barr, who became a local legend

for refusing to vacate his house as a protest. Jimmy hangs out at the Pound Loney, "a workingman's club except that no one in it has any work."

Conroy begins by briskly and effectively recapitulating the recent history in the north. In the late '60s, Catholics, who make up about 40 percent of the region's 1.5 million people, formed a peaceful movement to protest discrimination they suffered in employment and housing, and the gerrymandered electoral system that prevented them from raising their grievances effectively. The Protestant majority con-

**A powerful, comprehensive and fair account of Ireland's troubles.**

trolled the local authorities, including the police who stood by as mobs invaded Catholic areas. Conroy's neighbors have vivid memories of "the night they burned Bombay Street," when bands of Protestants from the bordering Shankill area torched homes along what had been until then an informal, rough boundary. Today it is a tense line of hostile truce.

**A calm persuasion:** Britain—governed by Harold Wilson and Labour—sent in troops, a move that Catholics welcomed at first.



# Archaeology and prehistory: everybody gets their digs in

**The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future**  
By Riane Eisler  
Harper & Row, 261 pp., \$16.95

By Rachel Sternberg

**A**RCHAEOLOGISTS LIKE TO THINK they are assembling, piece by piece, an objective view of the past. Some pieces, to be sure, can be known with great precision: how a figurine was fashioned, or how rooms within a house were organized. But small, mundane observations such as these have limited appeal. The big picture is what everybody really wants.

That's why archaeologists must use their imaginations, particularly for prehistoric periods. They handle a figurine and imagine the religious beliefs that might have inspired its creation. They stroll through ruined rooms and imagine the social relations of the people who once lived there. It's a fun game but full of cheating, because to argue from the material to the non-material is, quite simply, immaterial.

**A different look:** And the game turns out to be not so much a jigsaw puzzle as a kaleidoscope. With each rotation, the pieces fall into a new

configuration. What feminist Riane Eisler does in *The Chalice and the Blade* is to give the kaleidoscope an unusually sharp twist.

Eisler argues that there was a time, before written records, when the women and men who inhabited Europe lived together in friendly partnership. Men did not dominate women, nor did women dominate men. Society was egalitarian rather than hierarchical. It was held together by a spirit of cooperation rather than by force. The power of the universe to bring forth new life—a power symbolized by the chalice—was worshipped above all else.

Then warring tribes swept in and destroyed the peace. They imposed their own social system, based on the rule of men over women. The destructive powers of the sword, or blade, were worshipped—and frequently employed. Since then, the history of the world has unfolded in the shadow of violence, culminating in an arms race that threatens to blot out humanity.

Yet the partnership mode of social organization, which Eisler calls "gylany," has reappeared briefly and intermittently over the centuries and brought with it cultural flowering. "Like a plant that refuses to be killed no matter how often it

is crushed or cut back,...gylany has again and again sought to reestablish its place in the sun." Now, it seems, is such a time and our very survival depends on its final success.

**A nuclear blade:** "Today we stand at another potentially decisive branching point," writes Eisler. "At a time when the lethal power of the Blade—amplified a million-fold by megatons of nuclear warheads—threatens to put an end to all human culture, the new findings about both ancient and modern history reported in *The Chalice and the Blade* do not merely provide a new chapter in the story of our past. Of greatest importance is what this new knowledge tells us about our present and potential fu-

**Eisler exposes archaeologist's male-centered, interpretative follies, but proceeds to commit a few analagous excesses.**

ture."

Of what does this new knowledge consist? Eisler draws on the recent scholarship of archaeologists, feminist historians, and social scientists whose "chaos" theories emphasize the possibilities of sudden change. Her purpose is to create a grand synthesis, to reinterpret the world, to show that the balance of power between the two halves of humanity—female and male—is fundamental to history.

She starts with prehistory. The evidence for early periods, as I have

## HISTORY

said, does not speak for itself. It's the archaeologists who do the talking, and on the whole these archaeologists have tended to be men. Eisler easily exposes their male-centered interpretative follies, which are many. The eminent Nicolas Platon, for example, is caught suggesting that women in Bronze Age Crete enjoyed high status due to the "absence of men on long sea journeys." Virtually the entire archaeological establishment is caught assuming that prehistoric men ran every show.

Unfortunately, Eisler then proceeds to indulge in similar excesses of free association and sleight of hand—with a vengeance. The chapter on Crete, for example, shows at work the lively imagination on which so many archaeologists depend: "Even the Goddess's famous double axe symbolized the bounteous fruitfulness of the earth. Shaped like the hoe

axes used to clear land for the planting of crops, it was also a stylization of the butterfly, one of the Goddess's symbols of transformation and rebirth."

**The long stretch:** Written evidence from later periods is stretched back as far as it will go—and farther. An Elam document about a woman bequeathing property to her daughter is made to recall "an earlier time when descent was matrilineal and women were not yet male-controlled." Yet records from 2000 B.C. say nothing about the social realities of, say, 3000 B.C.

Was there ever a time free of male domination and war? Since Eisler needs a precedent for peace and partnership in order to argue for their future viability, she's interpreted ancient myths of lost paradises—Atlantis, the Garden of Eden, and more—as folk memories of a happier epoch characterized by equality at home and harmony at large. Archaeology, alas, can never yield the proofs that Eisler craves, but she seems undismayed. The animal bones found in Kurgan graves provide "further archaeological evidence that there has been not only a radical social shift but a radical ideological shift as well." Still, she's right to challenge everything she does, and her claims of feminine roots for agriculture, pottery, weaving, prophecy, healing, justice and even writing are refreshing, if impossible to prove.

She's on firmer ground when she moves to history. At least there are contemporary documents to work with—documents that reflect social relations far more clearly than pot sherds and old bones can ever do. From ancient Greece to Christian Rome to Europe during the Enlightenment, she reclaims a place for women and tries to show that the more sway women have, the healthier the world.

Yet this leads her to reduce the complex course of Western history to a single underlying cause: gender relations. War is the outcome of the suppression of women. No one has come up with a totally satisfying explanation for World War I, but to say that "Nazi Germany was one of the most violent reactions to the gylanic thrust" seems to be missing other vital points.

She arrives at the present with harsh words for those who remain blind to women's poverty, hunger, and need for reproductive choice, whether in the veiled precincts of Ayatollah Khomeini or the welfare households of America.

What does Eisler give us? A new and hopeful myth intended to inspire the world toward a future free of nuclear threat, environmental destruction, overpopulation and other modern ills. I leave it wishing it were really true. ■

**Rachel Sternberg** is a Mexico City-based freelance writer and former *In Short* editor of *In These Times*.





By Pat Aufderheide

**W**HEN THE REVOLUTION WAS new, we made a certain kind of film—we went out in the streets for our material," Cuban director Tomas Gutierrez Alea was explaining to a Brazilian journalist at the annual Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana this December.

She had just asked the bombshell question: did the director of the world-renowned *Memories of Underdevelopment* agree with Brazilian critics (who thanks to years of military censorship in the '60s and '70s had only recently seen his life work) that his later work was less interesting than his early work?

"But now that the revolution is institutionalized," he continued, "we have to find new approaches.

## CUBA

It's not enough to make triumphalist cinema. We need to make movies that reflect the problems we live in as we build this society." Gutierrez Alea was taking a break from shooting nearby on his new film, a period love story from a Gabriel Garcia Marquez script that he described as a film with universal themes.

But the Brazilian journalist's question touched a nerve. Despite some zestful comedies on such subjects as the housing shortage and marriage, recent Cuban work—especially by veteran directors—has been wan. For instance, *A Successful Man*, the latest film from Humberto Solas, who as a wunderkind made the dazzling *Lucia*, is notable primarily for its lush look. Pastor Vega, whose *Portrait of Teresa* rocked Cuba with its portrayal of pervasive machismo, most recently produced a flop with a claustrophobic filmed theater piece. Even *Up to a Certain Point*, Gutierrez Alea's most recent work, while daring in conception—it's a challenge to the pretensions of intellectuals, in the form of a story about a love affair between an intellectual and a worker—is a frail exercise. The film suffered severe and unexplained cuts, and it's impossible to tell what it might have looked like.

**Founders and followers:** The Cuban film institute also produced few innovative directors in the generation immediately after its founders. Among the young feature directors there's competence on display, but little that evokes the revolutionary aesthetics of the founding generation. Documentary has had incisive moments, in the generation after that of ebullient, antagonistic Santiago Alvarez, but occasional investigative and critical pieces have been more the exception than the rule in recent years.

Filmmakers have historically had



Cuban film and video industries confront the problems of codifying revolutionary changes.

## Film doldrums help push Cuba beyond stolid state TV

a standoffish attitude toward television, as well. Television, in Cuba as everywhere else, is a far more politicized medium than film simply because of its mass reach and pervasiveness. It's also been a medium, as everywhere else, that required tighter timetables and lower budgets than filmmaking. In recent years, however, the technical facilities of Cuban television have leapfrogged in capability, making Cuba a top runner among Latin countries for video technology, while the film institute's facilities have barely held their own.

**Shakeup:** Now, major changes are rocking both Cuban film and television. They directly affect production, can't help but affect the political atmosphere for creative

artists, and promise to open doors to new and more energetic production.

During the last year, Cuba has launched a nationwide "rectification" campaign—a push for higher productivity involving investiga-

tions of bureaucratic sloth, restructuring of state organizations and severe cutbacks in private enterprise experiments.

Rectification, officials repeatedly stress, has nothing to do with the Soviet push toward *glasnost* and

**Major changes are rocking both Cuban film and television. They directly affect production, can't help but affect the political atmosphere for creative artists, and promise to open doors to new and more energetic production.**

*perestroika*; rectification responds to organizational problems "specific to the Cuban economy." But as one Cuban filmmaker said quietly, "*Perestroika* comes to you whether you want it or not."

In the Cuban film institute, "rectification" means a complete reorganizing of the way films are approved and produced. From now on, three leading directors—Gutierrez Alea, Humberto Solas and Manuel Peres—will head separate workshops, and approve scripts themselves rather than sending them to Cultural Ministry official Julio Garcia Espinosa. After the ministry approves a budget, it's up to each workshop to make movies that succeed at the box office and meet quality standards of an internal committee. (Their efforts will be helped along by a new policy where exhibitors will pay more for lower-quality foreign films.)

Each workshop team earns only a basic stipend, and gets a piece of the film's profits. The decision, explained Garcia Espinosa, reflects in part the need to channel the talent of what has become three cliques, in the club-like atmosphere of the Cuban film institute, into three creatively competitive enterprises.

"We're trying to turn cliques into competitive units, to recognize that certain people identify with these leaders and take that fact and turn it into creative energy," Garcia Espinosa said. "Within the revolution, you need to recognize diversity; to guarantee art you have to guarantee diversity. Above all, we have to protect development. The important thing is to create a creative climate out of confrontation."

**Self-criticism on the tube:** Major changes have also come to Cuban television. There, rectification has resulted in several TV programs that open up public debate. Cuban TV may now hold the promise of a pointed self-critique within state media that film institute newsreels once tried to be.

*Points of View* features man-in-the-street interviews on problems of daily life, such as "voluntary" work brigades and family problems. *Wide Angle*, a studio talking-heads public affairs show, calls together debaters on international affairs topics.

The most popular program, though, is *On the Screen*, a monthly program that's the *60 Minutes* of Cuban TV. It travels into factories, where workers are interviewed about productivity problems. For instance, in one meat-processing plant, workers harshly indict the level of maintenance, which results in gross inefficiency.

"Everything's all screwed up here," one feisty woman says to the video camera. "It's been two years since we had any repairs here." An older man protests, "We're the ex-



perts. But I told them what was wrong, and they just moved me out of here." Several workers talk about lack of dedication, and failure of management to deal with problems. As worker after worker complains, you get a vivid sense not only of workers' fearlessness before the camera, but a classic love of the big machinery itself and a sense of loss when it breaks down through carelessness.

The program is conducted in two stages: one in-plant, the other on-screen. The interviews are shown on closed circuit TV to assembled workers, management and Communist Party officials. (In the meat-processing segment, the CP official complains, "We know people are stealing—somehow a couple of hams got out of here—but when

you ask people nobody knows about it. We can't prove it.") Then government officials are called in to respond to the problems posed and discussed within the factory. The finished program provides an edited version of the interviews and the follow-up meetings.

The show, an entirely new format for Cuban TV, has become a kind of sensation. When I watched a segment in a hotel lobby, Cubans kept stopping by to savor pungent comments and make their own, nodding knowingly. It's not only attracted audiences but inspired workers in factories where the program has not yet filmed to organize their own investigations. "They say, 'Let's do it like they do in *On The Screen*,'" said the program's producer, Daniel Diez.

"There were critical works before," said Diez, a veteran of news and investigative documentary who trained with master documentarian Santiago Alvarez. "But with rectification, it's being given much more emphasis." Can Diez continue to make waves in state television? He thinks so—at least for now. "I've got a lot of backing for this program because the Party supports it. But I'll tell you, the managers don't like to see us come in with the cameras. I guess no one likes to be criticized."

**Travelling signals:** Cuba is also beaming some of its TV programs on satellite internationally, on a service called Cubavision. Unlike the United States Information Agency's Worldnet, which programs specifically for an interna-

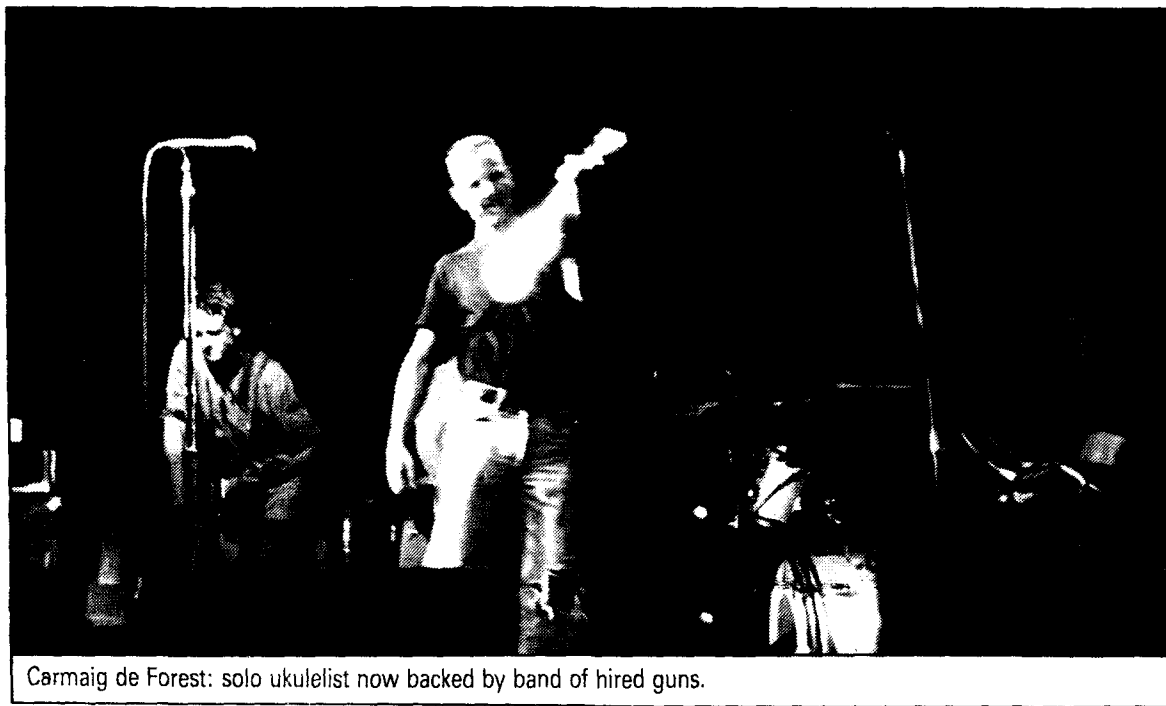
tional audience with its interviews of government officials and soft-news features touting the wonders of American technology, Cubavision's programs feature material of interest to its primary audience: Cubans overseas. So you're as likely to see a hot sports event as a documentary on Cuban health care. Some of the shows are picked up on the east coast of the U.S., and are available for anyone who can read the satellite coordinates and beam the programs down.

Finally, in a gesture that bows to the realities of new technology, filmmakers and TV people are coming closer together. (Increasingly, the technicians with the latest know-how are over on the television side, and the best actors live off TV, not film.) Filmmakers have

produced some works for television, and the film institute now has an elaborate system of video rentals and video salons, where viewers can see classics as well as the latest international adventure film on tape.

Still, Garcia Espinosa holds out a special ground for cinema. "We can work in video," he said, "and we do need a new language. But video has a danger, that it can so easily cross the line between amateur and professional. You run into the problem of not being rigorous. With film, you can subvert the code of cinema in a way video can never do, because it doesn't come out of cinema. And it's important to comment both on cinema and on reality."

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Carraig de Forest: solo ukulelist now backed by band of hired guns.

## A ukulele-toting sniper shoots from the quip

By Jeff Salamon

**D**URING THE VERY SAME WEEK congressional investigators were leavening their harangues of Oliver North with massive amounts of praise, Carraig de Forest was standing on a stage, ukulele in hand, wishing Ronald Reagan dead. Admittedly, that's an unfair comparison; the self-styled political glad-handers on Capitol Hill were playing to an audience much larger and more demanding than the couple of hundred people gathered that night at the downtown New York nightclub CBGB. And while North's interrogators apparently couldn't tiptoe lightly enough around the colonel, at CBGB it's nearly impossible to be offensive.

Every year, hundreds of bands pass screaming and yelling through CBGB, and plenty of them can be cathartic or funny or even moving. But it's difficult to shock or offend an audience that comes to be shocked or offended. That night, one patron wore a T-shirt that superimposed Adolf Hitler's mustache and haircut on Reagan's face,

while another let out what sounded like a cheer when de Forest mentioned Hitler in a song.

**A regular guy?** Yet somehow, amidst the fascist chic and blank-generation stares, de Forest managed to provoke the crowd. Because he can be by turns good-natured and introspective, and is

### MUSIC

somewhat awkward on stage, he comes off as the figure so many other pop stars only aspire to: the regular guy. So when his presidential death-wish rears its head it seems genuinely frightening. De Forest scares us with a character that borders on cliché: the quiet, courteous neighbor who one day guns down 11 bystanders at the local mall.

A singer/songwriter from San Francisco, de Forest has spent most of his career giving solo performances. On this year's debut album, *I Shall Be Released*, things have changed. With reclusive pop auteur Alex Chilton producing and playing guitar, and backed by a solid band, de Forest's music takes

on a rocking commercial sheen. De Forest sounds happy to be released from the cult audience a ukulele-bearing singer/songwriter is inevitably bound to.

Nonetheless the record retains a nice homemade feel. De Forest's cracked, sometimes flat voice is right up front, and a few of the songs (perhaps a few too many) have a sped-up, jittery feel that seems founded less in thematic necessity than in the distinctive rhythms of the ukulelist. This interface of the slick and the amateurish has an unexpected effect. The backing band may be session musicians and Chilton a hired hand, but they give an impression of community that makes the record's love songs, as dense with hostility as they are with wordplay, seem more like an actual attempt to work something out than the dead-end ravings of a solitary, embittered figure.

**A reasonable protest:** But it's de Forest's political commentary that really stands out. "Crack's No Worse Than the Fascist Threat" may be the most relentlessly reasonable protest song of all time, a fact de Forest all but advertises in song: "I'm just trying to keep things in perspective/I don't have a doubt that crack's destructive/ But I also know that fascism is seductive."

He's so reasonable, in fact, that

his levelheadedness threatens to topple the song's hard-edged funk attack. Another song, "Big Business," lacks this tension but works just as well in a more conventional way. It's an assault on corporate culture that sounds like it was written with an ice pick ("You think it's a jungle 'cause you kill for your wages/ But it's just a zoo with elaborate cages."

None of which prepares you for "Hey Judas." This is de Forest's lighthearted tour through Hell—he talks with Judas, Hitler, and Jim Jones and then muses over the fate of John Hinckley. De Forest, unsure Hinckley is genuinely evil, concludes, "I'm not sure that you're damned/ But it's a damn shame you missed." On record this is at once spooky and funny. It can be even more disconcerting live.

De Forest delivers these lines with a big grin on his face, and you can't help giggling along with him, deriving strength from his righteous anger as you look over your shoulder to make sure everyone else is laughing, too. Then he plunges deeper into tastelessness, savoring the idea of Ronald Reagan burning in Hell. At first this seems like little more than an afterthought. Your typically sharp-tongued, presumably atheistic, singer/songwriter could, after all, hardly think of a punishment less potent to be dishing out than banishment to the netherworld. But de Forest transforms this into something he can relate to; he tells us how he'll make sure his children, and then his grandchildren, know all about Ronald Reagan's wicked deeds, and that, when questioned, they'll be able to identify the mythical hothouse where he resides. And the audience gets giddier.

**To Hell and back:** Is this something to worry about? Not so long as you already feel a little uptight about laughing at this sort of thing. Maybe de Forest sending Reagan to Hell—instead of just killing him off—demonstrates that in his heart of hearts he's not cruel enough to really wish someone dead. Unless you literally believe in Hell, it's a pretty convenient way to keep

someone in the picture even after you've dismissed them.

But that's taking things pretty liberally. "Hey Judas" may be the most musically minimal, intensely verbal song on the record, but that doesn't make it a cogent policy prescription. In terms of *realpolitik*, killing Reagan would be an incredibly futile act—chop off one Reagan term and two Bush terms take its place. And once Reagan's out of office (to say nothing of deceased) I imagine de Forest will have plenty of new people to teach his children to hate. The demonification of Ronald Reagan may be a fine thing—here, now—but we shouldn't forget he's only a particularly useful tool of a much larger system.

Maybe de Forest does forget, and really, who can blame him? If he fantasizes about Reagan dying, maybe it's his way of getting even with an executive branch that commands secret armies while the rest of us are bound to ineffectuality by our quaint fealty to the rule of law. And if he cherishes the thought of teaching his kids to hate the Great Communicator, it's probably just a sublimation of his desire to rewrite the history of a time that's usually discussed in a language they decide on.

De Forest's just an example of the adage that in an insane time you've got to be a little crazy to keep yourself honest. On "Judas" he's wild-eyed on a subject—as assassination of democratically elected leaders—that virtually everyone along the political spectrum is levelheaded about. And on "Crack" he's a sober and reasonable voice in a debate usually marked by the *a priori* attack. His viewpoint is the reverse of society's, which, I suppose, is why his love songs approach relations from such strange angles—he'd only rhyme moon, June, and spoon if they were the punchlines to three separate jokes. He's an odd bird in a genre that rewards the familiar, a virtual Singer/Songwriter From Hell. So if he chooses to drag a few deserving souls down with him, who are we to complain?

**Jeff Salamon** is an assistant editor at the *Village Voice*.



# Leave

Continued from page 12

ticular group in the workforce, not society in general.

Despite the theoretical arguments, the controversy surrounding the bill is based on its economic impact. While the Chamber of Commerce claims the bill will be extremely costly, several studies have shown that the lack of family leave legislation is equally expensive, annually costing millions of dollars in lost wages and public aid.

But the Chamber of Commerce continues to argue that FMLA could ruin small businesses, and would force larger companies to raise consumer prices. Although the leave is unpaid, FMLA would require employers to continue pre-existing health insurance for the period of the leave, in addition to hiring temporary employees or shifting the workload. In a February 1987 study, the chamber estimated that FMLA's total yearly cost to business and the federal government would be more than \$27 billion. But after questioning from several members of Congress, the chamber last fall lowered the estimate to between \$10 and \$20 billion.

Then two months ago, the GAO issued its report on the legislation, estimating the yearly cost for firms with 50 or more employees at about \$188 million, and for businesses with 35 or more employees at \$212 million. Part of the discrepancy reflects the chamber's calculation of \$5.5 billion in lost productivity during the leave period. The GAO did not include productivity loss or gain in its estimate, and bill supporters argue that FMLA may even result in an increase in productivity because of a happier work force. The Women's Legal Defense Fund also says that neither the chamber nor the GAO factored in potential benefits of the bill, including reduced turnover and a more experienced work force.

In addition, a recent study by the Institute

for Women's Policy Research shows that the lack of parental leave costs families and taxpayers an estimated \$363 million a year. The study found that women who cannot return to their jobs after caring for a newborn or adopted child lose \$255 million in foregone earnings. These women cost American taxpayers \$108 million more in public income assistance than do women who have re-employment rights.

The Women's Policy Research study also found that workers who must take a leave because of illness lose \$100 billion in earnings, and public income programs pay an estimated \$8 billion annually for these workers.

**Filling the gap:** The FMLA developed out of a 1984 California federal district court decision. The court ruled that a California maternity leave statute was pre-empted by the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act requiring that pregnancy-related disabilities be treated like other disabilities under an employer's health plan. The Supreme Court reversed the original decision, however, say-

**The Chamber of Commerce claims the bill is too costly, but several studies show that a lack of family leave laws is just as expensive.**

ing that a minimal standard for the treatment of pregnancy-related disabilities does not preclude states from passing laws that go beyond the federal minimum.

By last January, when the Supreme Court decision was handed down, several women's groups and unions had begun lobbying Congress to fill the gap in support left by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. As Lenhoff says, the Supreme Court ruling showed the time was ripe for a push for a parental leave statute.

Since the bill was first introduced by Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) it has undergone significant changes, mainly cutting back the leave time and exempting small businesses.

In its current form FMLA has strong bipartisan support in both houses of Congress. And although President Reagan has said he would veto any legislation requiring parental leave, Feinstein says that he believes Reagan can be persuaded to sign the bill. Because the Reagan administration is known for voicing concern for the American family, bill supporters say it would be politically embarrassing for the president to veto what is being promoted as "pro-family" legislation.

As Feinstein says, "There are costs in not providing this kind of leave; costs to the em-

ployer, costs to the individual, costs to the family, and costs in government spending, which is the most intangible, but probably the most significant. We are always talking about the role of the family, or the breakdown of the family in causing the whole range of social ills. And people are always telling policy-makers to deal with the root causes, not just the symptoms of these social problems. We argue that this bill is highly cost effective from the point of view of broader social questions, and it is tied directly to government spending." □

# Childcare

Continued from page 13

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), which is similar to ABC, though much less generous: \$875 million would be distributed over three years.

Just a short time ago people like Hyde and Hatch were manning the barricades against any federal support for "communal" childcare. The last attempt at national day-care legislation was vetoed in 1971 by Richard Nixon, who was under pressure not to undermine what the right wing saw as the ideal family.

Marsha Renwanz, staff director for the Senate subcommittee responsible for the ABC bill, believes conservative support for day care signals an important change. "The debate is no longer whether the federal government should be involved in day care, but how will the government play a leadership role," Renwanz says.

ABC promises to be an important national test of an issue that affects more than 14 million parents—men as well as women, according to Barbara Reisman, director of the Manhattan-based Child Care Action Campaign. Millions more need some care for the times when they are at work but their children aren't in school.

**Loud and clear:** Parents are a vocal group. The Children's Defense Fund's Wilkins says she is often told by congressional staffers, "You wouldn't believe how much they're talking to me about the childcare issue." Polls show a majority of people favor more government spending for day care. Rosaria

Salerno, a Boston city councillor who was elected largely on the strength of her childcare platform, calls childcare "the issue for the '80s and '90s."

Some presidential candidates also see the issue as a winner. Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) is an ABC co-sponsor. Other Democrats, like Dukakis and former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt, promise to implement national versions of their state programs.

Organizers say that the childcare issue can reclaim the "family issue" for the Democrats by showing support for real as opposed to ideal families. "Over the Reagan years, we've seen that children are the ones falling through the safety net," says Vada Manager, a spokesman for the Babbitt campaign.

Although childcare advocates are optimistic about a change in federal day-care policy, they point out the importance of action at other levels. Unions can press for more childcare clauses in contracts. Businesses can play an important role by showing more flexibility regarding schedules and time-off policies. Schools have to acknowledge their role as day-care providers, not just educators. "Public schools are still operating as if this were an agrarian society," says the Child Care Action Campaign's Reisman. "My kids do not have to be home at three to milk the cows, and they do not have to be home in June, July and August to harvest the wheat."

"It's not enough to say that childcare is important—it's been important for the last decade," adds Reisman. "People have to realize that it's a political problem, not just a personal one." □



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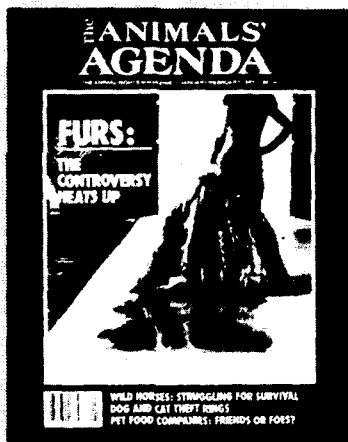
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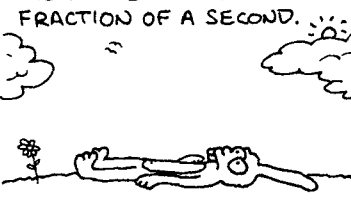

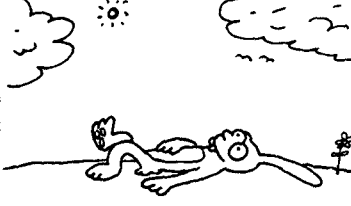

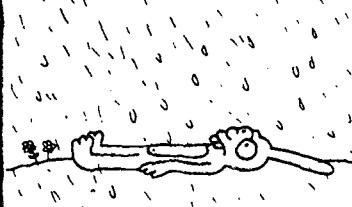
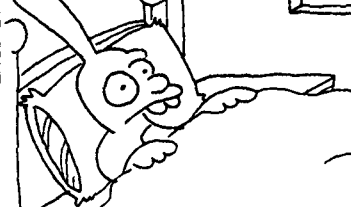
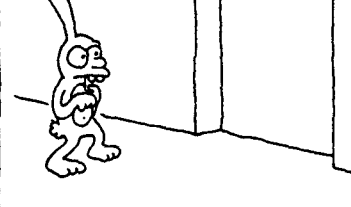
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Directed by Don North

By Pat Aufderheide

IT MUST BE 1988 IF WE'RE WATCHING A COMEDY about Vietnam. *Good Morning, Vietnam*, starring Robin Williams as the cheerfully demented disc jockey Adrian Cronauer, is closer to the comedy of *M\*A\*S\*H* (the movie) than that of *Mork and Mindy*. And it's at least as thought-provoking as recent Vietnam films such as *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*.

Its biting humor doesn't cheat on the conflict it draws from. And Williams is an inspired choice to play the d.j. whose hysterical stream-of-consciousness raps deliver the tensions of the moment to us—at the same that they defuse them, for the troops.

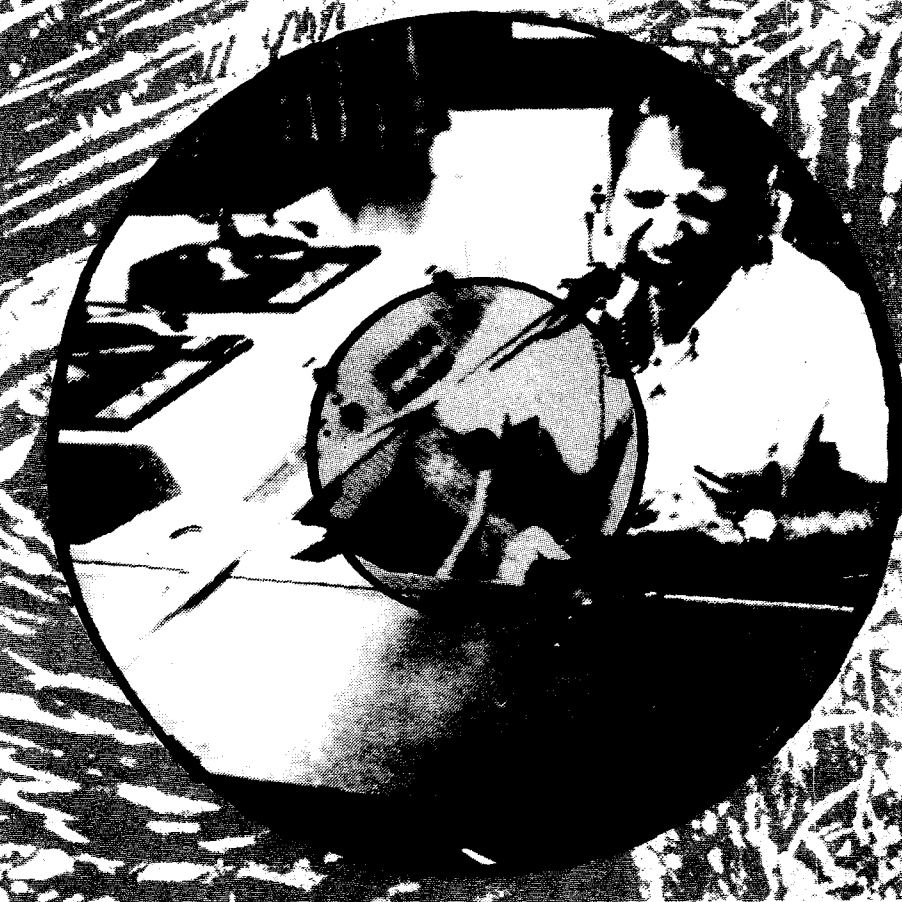
If it takes us back to 1965, when the "police action" was just about to turn into a full-fledged war and rock was marking the beat for the counter-culture, it's also ruthlessly contemporary in its moral. Yes, this is a movie with a message: an invading soldier can't grow garden-variety friendship across cultural lines, not in the middle of a war where the enemy is the people. There are some places where Capra-esque Americana just won't work, not without a shift in political vision.

The tale, written by Mitch Markowitz, who won his spurs in TV sitcoms, puts the naivete of American populism at the center of the story, with the adventures of self-styled wildman Cronauer on and off Armed Forces Radio in Vietnam. (It's taken loosely from the real life story of Adrian Cronauer, now a 49-year-old law student but then an army d.j.) There's a sweetness to many of the scenes that sometimes carries a flavor of sanitized television, but mostly works to capture the mix of nice-boy and bad-boy that marked middle-class male youth culture at the time.

**Shock jock:** Cronauer walks into the staid authoritarian environs of army radio and blows them away. It's his clothes, it's his flip style, but most of all it's his blast-from-the-future radio wake-up show. Robin Williams produces monologues that you have to believe were improvised and you can hardly believe at all, savagely spinning on subjects that range from the weather to censored news and conjuring an array of bizarre audio alter egos to interview.

Cronauer basks in adulation at the bottom and at the top—a general who knows how big a mess the army's wading into thinks he's the solution to morale problems. His sidekick Garlick (Forest Whitaker) is a gentle giant who loves him like a brother (Whitaker miraculously makes this character warm, not obsequious). It's the tight-assed guys in the middle who hate his guts, try to do him in and eventually get him kicked out.

But not before Cronauer's taken a trip into the streets and hearts of Saigon. Trying to charm a lovely Vietnamese girl Trinh (star



Thai actress Chintara Sukapatana), he befriends her brother Tuan (Vietnamese immigrant Tung Thanh Tran). Tuan takes him home to see Vietnamese village life in precarious peace, and stays to drink with him at bars. Tuan even saves his life.

On-air, Cronauer sounds like a madman, but he basically cares. He cares about Tuan and his family. He's outraged by military censors who make him lie by omission on the air. He feels a bond with soldiers for whom he's healthy medicine in the morning. The dust storms he raises all seem fuel to Cronauer's energy, until he's confronted with the undeniable fact that Tuan, his one Vietnamese friend, is working for the other side. That's when Cronauer's working world collapses, and he has to go home, baffled and sad and frustrated.

Adrian Cronauer is the youth-culture version of the ugly American, who doesn't want just to make friends, but to be a friendly, open person—an all-American character. But the conditions of the Vietnam "police action" just don't permit him to be somebody he recognizes. The humor in *Good Morning, Vietnam* spins on Cronauer's awareness of reality and vitality that his stuffy superiors deny. The sadness lies in his inability to see through to the core of that reality.

**Delicate balance:** Director Barry Levinson executes *Good Morning, Vietnam* with

frank energy and powers of observation that marked the best moments of *Diner* and *Tin Men*. He's uncannily good at making you feel like you're listening in on conversations that ought to be grossly improbable, at rendering schlumps human, and making the casual moment revealing.

And he manages, just barely, to balance elements of the film that constantly threaten to pull it apart: the force of Williams' bravura performances; the sentimental relationships; the sketchy, bordering-on-caricature characters; and most of all, the harsh context of the war, which only appears in flashes and snippets, almost subliminally.

But those subliminal messages are flashing directly at Cronauer's puppy-dog mad-dog naivete. They show us soldiers rudely brutalizing civilians, grunts looking haggardly into the camera on slogging marches, and terrorist explosions rocking a Saigon market scene. *Good Morning, Vietnam* puts Robin Williams-the-mouth at the center of the action, but he's framed in conflicts that give the comedy its sharp, dark edge. We know, as Adrian Cronauer gets on a plane to go home, that he'll never be the same again.

**The rest of the story:** In a new 50-minute video, *The War in El Cedro*, produced by veteran independent director Don North (Guazapa; *Afghanistan: Seven Soviet Years*),

we see several versions of what might have happened to Cronauer after he returned.

We meet 10 war veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam who decided to make a purifying pilgrimage to the Nicaraguan town of El Cedro, where Benjamin Linder died in a contra attack. Their mission was not only to rebuild a health center destroyed three times, but to come to grips with their own conflicts about patriotism and American warfare.

More of a diary of the men's experiences in El Cedro than a documentary, the video is unpretentious and heartfelt. They testify, at times in voices of wonder (that tone of perpetual naivete that seems to be a uniquely American voice), at the ordinary humanity of Nicaraguans trying to live in-between bullets and bombs.

**The war at home:** But mostly they spend time with their own consciences. When the residents of El Cedro accept them into the community, several veterans remember the absence of any such human warmth in their relations with Vietnamese—although they, like Cronauer in *Good Morning, Vietnam*, had tried, with an intensity that shows how important it had been for their own sanity.

They struggled to make sense of their own past, their own actions and the wars that cost so much blood. One of them recalls that Vietnam cost 3 million deaths—the total population of Nicaragua. An ex-Marine fiercely says that he doesn't want to put his Vietnam experience to rest, but to remember and understand it. A youthful vet. only months out of the Navy, says, "I have a great fear that if my country is killing children in Nicaragua...someday they're gonna turn those same killers and death squads on people in the U.S., my own family, our own people. I'm doing this out of deep concern for my own country."

*The War in El Cedro* is less about Nicaragua and the contras than the meaning of wars like this one for Americans, especially those who may have to fight them. It's a disturbing, moving film with a ready audience among peace, church and Central American groups. It ought to get a broadcast airing as well, but the specter of balanced programming that haunts broadcast standards-and-practices bureaucrats may make it difficult to see. After all, the passion of the veterans in El Cedro is anything but balanced, although it's deployed in search of equilibrium and sanity. Ironically, the video's already been picked up for European TV, while U.S. airings are still in negotiation.

*The War in El Cedro* is the end of the story of *Good Morning, Vietnam*. It's about people who don't shrink at danger but can't live with self-betrayal. *Good Morning, Vietnam* captures that conflict with sharp-edged period comedy and pungent performances. *The War in El Cedro* tells it in the voices of participants whose painful, personal testimony is documentary proof of *Good Morning, Vietnam*'s topicality.

*The War in El Cedro* is available from Northstar Productions, 3003 O St. NW, #1, Washington DC 20007, (202) 338-7337. □  
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## Two new films play the flip-side of Vietnam